Photoshopography: Glenn Mitchell - Effective B&W Conversion Using Channel Mixer

PBASE Magazine

October 2005

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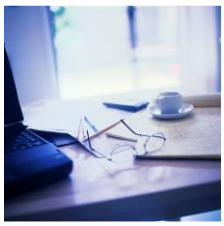
Editorial Notes

"I THINK PHOTOGRAPHS SHOULD BE PROVOCATIVE AND NOT TELL YOU WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW. IT TAKES NO GREAT POWERS OR MAGIC TO REPRODUCE SOME BODY'S FACE IN A PHOTOGRAPH.
THE MAGIC IS IN SEEING PEOPLE IN NEW WAYS. " - DUANE MICHALS

COVER PHOTO BY MONIQUE BOGAERTS
DESIGN BY GARY BLANCHETTE



Editor's Desk

I've been staring at this page for quite a while now, wondering how to start. A friend of mine recently said, taking photos is much easier than writing (at least for some of us) - how true !

The first thing you might notice is that we have changed fonts to 'Trebuchet', which I hear is a more "professional" looking font for magazines and is also easier on the eye. Let us know what you think of this font.

To keep our commitment to innovation, with each issue, we ask someone with new ideas to participate as a co-editor and contribute towards the magazine. Last time, it was Christina Craft and this time, it's Eric Kuhn. Eric is a young and energetic freshman at Hamilton College (upstate NY) and is always ready to dive into any task we ask of him. I should know - for everything we asked him to do, he would always follow up with "What else can I do ?". Eric has been writing for newspapers ever since the fifth grade and in June published an interview with Donald Trump. He also was the Chief Political Correspondent for a local television show, where he interviewed people ranging from the Rev. Al Sharpton to 9-11 Commission member Bob Kerrey to CNN's Jack Cafferty. Now that's quite a mouthful, isn't it ?

In the previous issue, we also experimented with two new sections - the 'Learning' section and the 'Challenge' section. Both were met with resounding success and we have continued the two sections in this issue as well.
This time, we have Chuck Gardner, the portraiture and lighting *guru* talking about what makes a visually effective portrait and a challenge following these concepts. We have also expanded the retouching section with Glenn Mitchell sharing his thoughts on effective B&W conversion.

USER POLL:
While the Online version of the magazine will always be free, we have been asked by several readers to provide a printed magazine form for a subscription price. Would you be interested in this service if we (ever) provide it? Do let us know by sending us an email at magazine@pbase.com . Please do not ask us if we really will provide this service and when - as of now, we are just trying to assess reader interest.

The regular sections are all there - featuring Monique Bogaerts, Nature/Landscape photog extraordinaire as the PBase photog of the month and Doug Barber, a photog with an attitude in the commercial photog section. Alan Grant chimes in with a short and sweet article on travel tips.

The gear-heads will notice that this issue does not have the *Gear-Talk* section. We decided to take a break from it for this issue and continue it again starting with the next.

We would also like to thank all our readers for the donations that you have made via our main web page (www.pbase.com/magazine) - thank you, we can assure you that it is being put to good use (which includes several six-packs of beer).

And finally, a big thanks to Wanda, Gary and Larena for continuing to give so much of their time and commitment to the magazine. We hope you enjoy reading this issue, and please don't forget to write in to magazine@pbase.com with new ideas or comments.

~ Arjun Roychowdhury
www.pbase.com/arjunrc

Blogger

Please visit and comment in our new PBase Magazine blog at http://pbasemag.blogspot.com

Featured PBase Photographer: Monique Bogaerts

As Yousef Karsh said, *"The heart and mind are the true lens of the camera...."*
My passion for nature photography began with the love for animals. I have been fascinated with them ever since I was a young child.
Three years ago I started to photograph, and I never realized that photography can be a way to put your mind at rest. In moments of sadness you see things differently. You appreciate the little things in life and realize that happiness and health are the most important things in life. People should take some time to step back and realize this, and enjoy life more.
With my photos I try to show people a beautiful world around us and that you don't have to travel far, because most of my pictures are from my hometown and surroundings. Wake up, open your eyes and look around, see our world, all the people, so many beautiful places, so many colors and new faces. Yes, to photograph is a passion to me, which I hope to practice and to share with other people for a long time!

PBase Magazine: How did you get interested in Nature Photography?

I ran a dog-grooming salon for 12 years. Day in and day out I was grooming dogs. It was fun, but I was locking myself inside, I didn't go anywhere. I loved the work, but in the back of my mind I've always been playing with the idea of doing something completely different. One day, about three years ago, we bought our first digital camera, a Canon G2, intending to capture the beauty of nature in our own area. I had never taken pictures before; everything was new to me. I wanted to do this my own way, inspired by my father. He taught me to not only observe but also understand nature. Little by little I discovered the relationship between man, animal and nature. We spent a lot of time together in the woods. I committed these images and experiences to my memory. In moments of sadness or joy, which everybody has at some time, I bring them back, providing reference and balance.
Even now, after so many years of exploring the outdoors, a walk in nature still has a healthy influence on my mood.
My father passed away last year after losing the fight to a merciless illness. I still have difficulties coping; a long nature walk comforts me. It's his arm around my shoulder.
In this sense I regard my work a tribute to my father.
I have a beautiful daughter Joyce and sweet husband Luc, who are my strength.

PROFILE

NAME: MONIQUE BOGAERTS

WEBSITE: WWW.PBASE.COM/ZIPPO

FROM: LOMMEL, BELGIUM

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE: NATURE

YEARS AS PHOTOGRAPHER:3 YEARS

EQUIPMENT: CANON 10D, 1DMKII

LENSES: CANON: 50MM 1.8, 85MM 1.8,135MM 2.0L, 70-200MM 2.8L IS, 17-40MM 4.0L, 300MM 4L IS

KNOW MONIQUE

"I ran a dog-grooming salon for 12 years. Day in and day out I was grooming dogs, it was fun, but I was locking myself inside, I didn't go anywhere. I loved the work, but in the back of my mind I've always been playing with the idea of doing something completely different"

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PBM: If you were to carry only two lenses with you for nature photography, which would they be?

I'll take Canon's 70-200 f2.8 L IS and the 17-40 f4 L.

PBM: You have a beautiful gallery dedicated to lowlights and fog. How do you prepare yourself for lowlight photography and what tips would you like to share about the ideal times and techniques for these special sceneries?

You have to play with the light that's available and usually this is a lot less than you would prefer.
I'll be in place before sunrise. But every sunrise is different; every scene of fog is new. Sometimes it's so beautiful and I enjoy it so much that I forget to take pictures.
A tripod is a delight in low light situations, especially if you need to use slow shutter speeds, ISO 100 or apertures of F18 or more.

PBM: If you were to choose two of the most beautiful places in the world for nature photography, which would they be and why ?

The most beautiful place is the place where I live (Lommel, Belgium). I don't have to go far to take pictures. The scenery here is gorgeous and I know where to find all the beautiful spots so I don't need a guide.

I think Thailand is also a beautiful country, lovely nature; full of color and the friendliness of the people is almost legendary.

I don't like to travel. I prefer sleeping in my own bed. We have a lot of pets and it's not easy to leave them behind. Home, Sweet Home…

PBM: Do you have a Photoshop workflow that you use with landscape/nature photography that you would like to share ?

This is a frequently asked question. I can only say that every workflow is different and every picture is different. I sometimes use a layer with a Gaussian blur to get a softer look. I sometimes use Fred Miranda's Velvia plug-in to get more depth in the colors.
I always shoot in RAW and use Capture One to convert to a 16-bit TIFF image. This gives me more control and results in less Photoshop work.

PBM: Is photography your primary business or is it just a hobby ? If it is a business, who do you usually sell to (corporates, individuals, hobby-groups etc.) ?

It started as a hobby, since about a year it is my job. I do a lot of work involving events and sports and assignments for companies.
It's a lot of fun. You get to meet so many people who are in showbiz, politics, royalty and such. It's a different world, you really have to throw a mental switch going from one extreme to the other.
A lot of my pictures are published in nature magazines, in books and on postcards, prints

Monique's Favorite Nature photography Lenses:

"I'll take Canon's 70-200 f2.8 L IS and the 17-40 f4 L."

"I sometimes use a layer with a Gaussian blur to get a softer look. I sometimes use Fred Miranda's Velvia plug-in to get more depth in the colors.
I always shoot in RAW and use Capture One to convert to a 16-bit TIFF image, this gives me more control and results in less Photoshop work"

and printed on canvas.
I also participate in a monthly magazine published by our city.
Sometimes I am so busy that I don't get around to doing my own thing, but when I do have the time I enjoy it even more, maintaining my inspiration.

PBM: How difficult is animal/bird photography? What are the basic guidelines you follow when shooting fast moving animals?

The biggest challenge with Birds and Animals is that you cannot make them go where you want them to. Birds really wander about, but you can tempt them with food, especially in wintertime when they come to our garden in droves. A fast lens and camera are essential. Although my Canon G2 has proven that it can also handle this. It's a matter of being lucky and in the right place.

PBM: Some of your finest bird photographs are those which capture 'motion' (that is, using a slower shutter speed to capture movement). Many beginners in this technique find it very challenging to capture 'motion' without resulting in an out of focus or blurred picture. Would you share some tips on how to capture motion effectively?

I try to focus on the eyes. This can provide surprising results. Sometimes I use my flash, a Canon 580 EX. I think it is a matter of luck, but most of you have probably found that out by now.
Animals are so unpredictable and it always is a kick to capture that special moment.

"I try to focus on the eyes. This can provide surprising results. Sometimes I use my flash, a Canon 580 EX. I think it is a matter of luck…"

"Animals are so unpredictable and it always is a kick to capture that special moment."

PBM: Describe for us one of your recent nature photography trips, how you prepared for it and what you did.

Our most recent trip was to the Belgian Ardennes, a lovely green oasis with soft hills, small rivers and lots of wildlife.
We had rented a beautiful cabin on top of a hill with a room for eight together with my sister, her husband and two children. We brought all our photo equipment.
We (just my husband and I) were on the trail before the crack of dawn. By the time we got back several hours had passed and the children were just getting out of bed. There are a lot of wild boars in that area. You have to be careful around them since they are very protective of their young. If they feel threatened they will charge right at you. Their tusks can kill a man. We were very cautious because we had seen a group with a few piglets. The scenery is so beautiful; I remember thinking that the place could have been used for the *Lord of the Rings*. We'll go back, I know the good spots now and it will be even more beautiful in the fall. Those will be long days filled with shooting pictures. I must remember to take our tent for cover.

PBM: Which tripod do you use and how often do you find yourself using tripods?

I don't use a tripod that often. We usually get into a fight; they are clumsy and way too heavy to lug around. I have a Manfrotto, but a Gitzo will soon replace it.

PBM: Monique, thank you for taking time to participate in this magazine

It was an honor doing this. I also want to thank our friends Tine Verheyden and her husband Eddy for translating this interview for me.

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Pro-Corner: Doug Barber

Born in Binghamton, NY, Doug grew up in a military family living all over the United States, including Annapolis, Maryland, and graduated from high school in Okinawa, Japan. Doug's love for Maryland brought him back to receive a degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1971. Doug studied photography, sculpture, and painting, but photography offered a way to explore new environments, and meet interesting people.

For thirty years as a freelance photographer Doug has produced award winning work in annual reports, magazines, and publications for nonprofit organizations, and corporations. In 2004 Doug won the gold award in The Governor's Cup Professional Photography Competition. In 2004 Doug's work was also featured in the "Motorcycles and Art" show at the Susquehanna Art Museum, and "Old School Biker Photos" at Gettysburg Bike Week, in The Americas Arts Gallery. In 2005 his work was featured at Gettysburg College Schmucker Art Gallery "Machine Aesthetic, The Art Of The Harley".

PBase Magazine: You have mastered color, black and white, hand tinting, and digital photography. Do you have a favorite? Why?

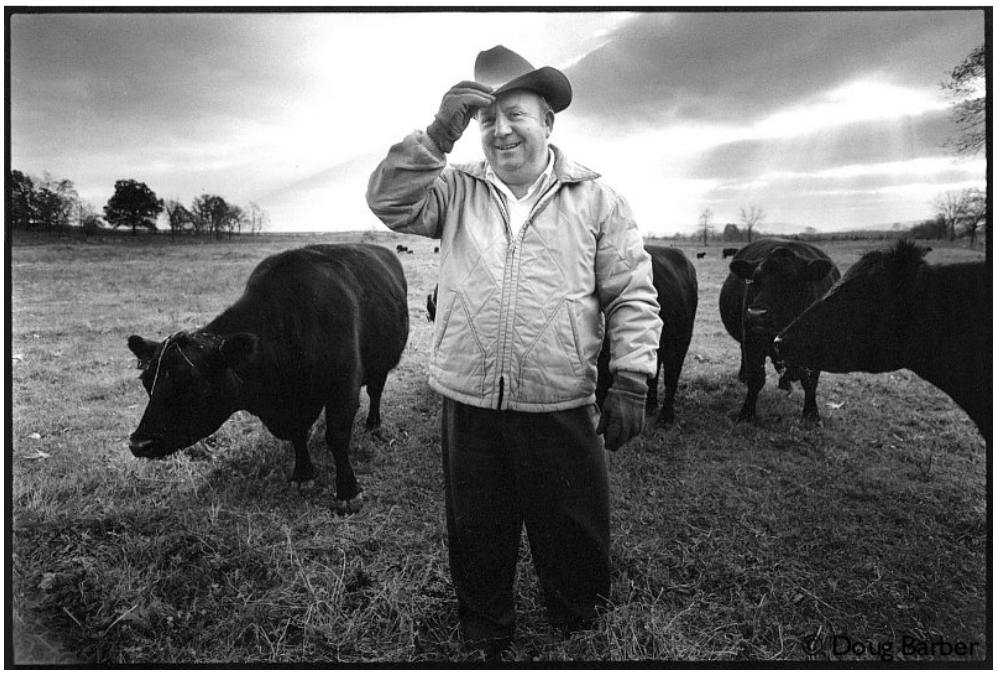
For my personal work I prefer B&W because it is so direct, without any distractions.

PBM: How do you choose if a photograph should be in black and white or in color?

The image will tell you. Unfortunately I don't have a choice in commercial work. For me every element of the image needs to work together. For B&W or color, you will need to pick and choose the elements of the image. It is a bit easier now with digital. You shoot everything color, then create your B&W later.

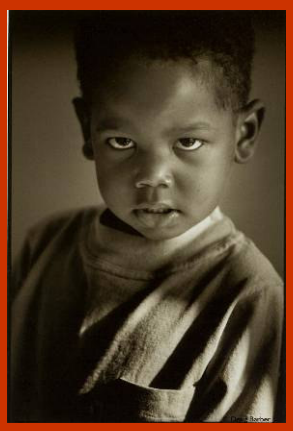
PBM: You also mentioned that you do 'college photography'. How is it different from any other event photography and did you ever face any 'privacy' concerns by officials and/or parents?

Most institutions are covered by a blanket agreement signed by a student upon admission. Then again I never photographed anyone who objected, and I would never put anyone in a compromising situation.



DOUG SAYS:

"For my personal work I prefer Black and White because it is so direct, without any distractions"



PROFILE

NAME: DOUG BARBER

WEBSITE: HTTP://WWW.DOUGBARBER.COM

FROM: NORTH BEACH, MARYLAND, USA

YEARS AS PHOTOGRAPHER: 30+

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE: VARIED

EQUIPMENT: NIKON FILM AND DIGITAL

PBM: Describe for our readers, one of your more recent commercial projects and how you planned your day and shoot.

This summer I had a long term project photographing Herrington Harbor Marina, which by the way was a pleasure and a curse. The pleasure is that Herrington Harbor is beautifully landscaped. The curse, is it is an outside shoot, highly dependent on weather and lighting. I spent countless hours going over design layouts, scouting locations, coordinating with the owner, designer, and marina staff. Another element was that a lot of the photos were to be taken from a cherry picker (self-propelled two man lift). This meant calculating times and angles, then making arrangements to have the lift and operator available.

We all know that Mother Nature has a mind of her own. Even with watching weather maps and forecasts, one would wake up on what was to be a sunny day, only to find it overcast. Put into the mix other clients and their demands for your time. At the end, you put a lot of time into coordination, and trying to keep everyone happy. It also meant coming back at the end of a long day finding a long night of editing, and archiving digital images. All this so you could getup at the crack of dawn to do it all over again for another client. Sometimes I wish I had a staff to take care of all the details. Been there done that, what happens then is you have to photograph that much more to pay the added overhead. That's when it becomes too much like work. I like the diversity of my one-man shop. When it gets to be too much, I take a break. Try doing that with a staff pushing you along.

PBM: Photography 101 will teach you that when taking a portrait never have the person in the center smiling. Myth or reality?

Really? Sounds like something worth exploring. Reality is, the world is not flat, and someone had to go over the edge to find out. It may not work, or it may be a masterpiece. You will never know if you don't try.

PBM: How do you get your subjects to give you the perfect pose?

Just let them be themselves, take lots of photos, and throw most of them away. Sometimes it takes some open dialogue to get them feeling comfortable and find their space.

PBM: You have shot all over the world. There are clearly different challenges that come with different environments. What has been your most challenging photo to shoot?

It's all a challenge. The greater the challenge, the greater the reward. I find the simplest situation the most challenging. Police officers are paranoid. Psychiatrists are right up there with cops. Male executives are vainer than women. Children have minds of their own, but make the most interesting photos. I have a client who serves the severely handicapped. On every shoot I have well meaning agency representatives yelling smile to my subjects who are lost in their own world. My job is to control the distraction and let my subject connect with the camera in a personal and humane way. It takes a lot of patience, and intuition to control the "normal folks" and let my subjects shine in their own light. How I keep myself from losing it is a wonder at times.

PBM: You have spent 30 years making your living as an artist. What is your suggestion to someone who wanted to make a living as a photographer?

Have a healthy appreciation for living on the edge. Learn how to be aggressive without being offensive. Learn how to market yourself and to take care of business.

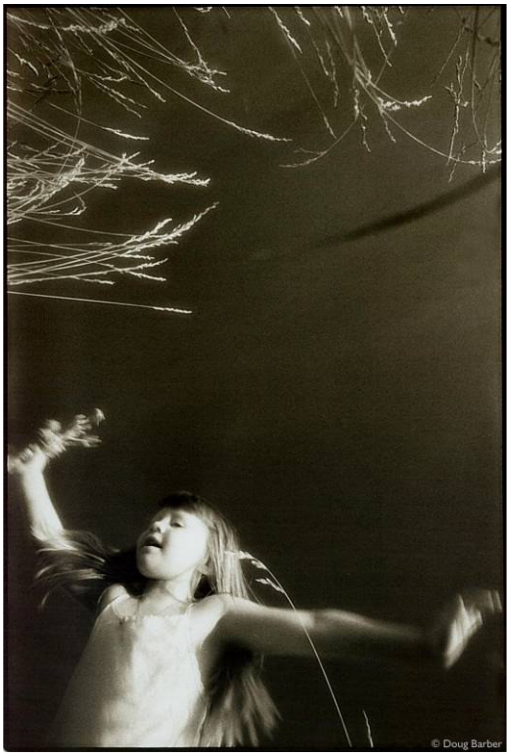
"We all know that Mother Nature has a mind of her own. Even with watching weather maps and forecasts, one would wake up on what was to be a sunny day, only to find it overcast. Put into the mix other clients and their demands for your time. In the end, you put a lot of time into coordination, and trying to keep everyone happy."

PBM: You have said, "I am not a photographer to make money. I make money to be a photographer." How hard is it for someone to make money as a photographer?

It's not hard at all. You just need to match your interests and tolerances with your work.

PBM: Do you have any advice if someone wanted to sell their work?

Find a mentor, and learn all you can about the business. Whatever you do, don't do it my way.
I am not a business man, I do get lucky at times. I was once called an opportunist, and I didn't take offence. I know when an opportunity presents itself that I can feel good about developing, and both my client, and I benefit. I have a hard time going out and selling myself, but I am thrilled to meet up with anyone who likes my work and wants discus a potential project. That is where the internet has been a



blessing. I have spent countless hours developing a web presence that brings potential clients to me. I have also calculated risk and reward for doing work that could help bring in more of my kind of photography. I have also done some work that kept me from having to get a real job. All in all I am not Malcolm Forbes. If there is one other bit of advice, that is don't be shy, get out and network. Here is wishing you all the best.

PBM: You left a potentially lucrative job to do what you do now. Is it fair to say that passion guides you, not only in life, but in your photographs?

Too much so. I don't have a pragmatic bone in my body.

PBM: What did you give up to be a photographer?

It's more of a trade off. I have gained more than lost. But I reckon security is the answer folks expect.

PBM: Could you ever see yourself as anything other than a photographer?

As a photographer I can have many different jobs vicariously, without getting sacked.
I have the deepest respect for those folks with real jobs, because I could never do it.

PBM: If you were stranded on an island with only one piece of photo equipment, what would it be?

An instamatic and a fishing pole. Seriously, if it records images, I'll learn to love it. If it stops working, there are other ways of expressing one's creative urges.

PBM: If you could change something, or re-shoot an event from the past, what would it be and how would you do it differently?

Damn, that happens more times than not. It's one of the reasons I'm bald. It's also the way we

"Find a mentor, and learn all you can about the business. Whatever you do, don't do it my way.
I am not a business man, I do get lucky at times. I was once called an opportunist, and I didn't take offense"

learn and perfect our craft. It is inevitable that with all the planning, and scouting, someone, or something will throw a monkey wrench into the works. No matter how hard you try, you will find yourself with your back against a wall, making silk purses out of sow's ears. You're scrambling around trying your best to put it together, with no time, no help, and absolutely no chance for a re-shoot. Either you do what you can do, or throw a premadonna hissy fit. Personally, I prefer the "do what you can do" option. It may not produce the best image, and when the smoke clears will find there were things that could have been done better. But, you gave your client an image better than what was thought possible. What is most important is, you did not fold under pressure. Every time you find yourself in that position afterwards you have even more self-confidence to produce. It gets a little easier, and your images get a bit better.

PBM: E. Steuart Chaney, owner of Herrington Harbor Marinas, said, "Doug has an instinct of how to capture the best photography using natural light." What is your opinion on the 'always use a flash' camp vs. the 'avoid a flash like the plague' camp when it comes to portraits? What about landscape photography?

If there is one rule I live by, it's forget the rules, and open your eyes and brain to what's around you. Some of the worst lighting situations spawn some great images. Landscapes, portraits, table top, whatever, unless you have an anal retentive art director standing over you, explore the possibilities.

"If there is one rule I live by, it's forget the rules, and open your eyes and brain to what's around you."

" It is inevitable that with all the planning, and scouting, someone, or something will throw a monkey wrench into the works. No matter how hard you try, you find yourself with your back against a wall, making silk purses out of sow's ears"

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Challenge #1 Results: Expressive Imagery

Please visit www.pbase.com/magazine/challenge_1 to see all the entries received for the PBase Magazine Challenge #1

1st Place Winner

Title: Alter Ego
Photographer: **Christine P. Newman**

Website:
http://www.pbase.com/eb2005/christine_newman

Please see here for Christine's comment on her image 'Alter Ego'

Christine P. Newman is a 15 year old experimental photographer living in Toronto (Canada) who enjoys her art to the fullest by exploring both digital and traditional techniques. Christine, currently a high school student, is planning to do her post-secondary studies in photography or a related field and hopes to make a career out of it.

Christine P. Newman

PHIL DOUGLIS' COMMENTS:

Christine Newman's "Alter Ego" is a shocking photograph. When looking at the thumbnail images of all of the entries in PBase Challenge #1, this picture leaps out at us and compels us to not only look at it but think about what we are looking at. Christine has created a self-portrait that is compelling, disturbing, and thoughtful. It challenges our imaginations and stirs our emotions. She has brilliantly analyzed her own image in the comprehensive commentary she provides along with it. There is no need for me to repeat what she has said -- she has accomplished all she has set out to do in terms of making an image that expresses an idea through abstraction, incongruity and human values.

In creating this self-portrait, Christine abstracts herself with a fiery mask of feathers, daring us to divine the nature of the person within. The resulting image is hypnotic, haunting, and emotionally challenging. I first saw this image when I was invited to comment on the work of members of a Canadian high school camera club who maintain a gallery on PBase. I thought then, and think now, that the eyes are the key to this image. The eyes speak as loudly as the vibrant color --fierce, proud, piercing -- human organs incongruously juxtaposed against an inhumanly feathered face.

Masks are symbols of deceit, pretense, of being something we are not. Christine uses this mask to express her character by hiding it. She employs color to intensify the image's emotional content, and her intimate vantage point forces our imaginations to deal with the animal that lies within her, and within all of us. With this image, fifteen year old Christine Newman produces the winner of PBase Challenge #1.

CHALLENGE #1:

Challenge #1 details:

Topic: Expressive Imagery

Judge: Phil Douglis

Start: July 11, 2005
End: September 11, 2005

The Challenge #1 Theme:

"I would like to challenge Artists everywhere to create an image that will integrate the principles of abstraction, incongruity and human values, as defined by the examples in the first three chapters of my cyberbook. I would hope that the image would express an idea in a fresh and powerful manner, and trigger the imaginations and emotions of all who will look at it.

In short, I am challenging artists to make an image that would virtually define photographic expression as I teach it in my cyberbook."

2nd Place

Title: Looking out Bali
Photographer: Patrick Maechler

Website: http://www.pbase.com/pm/travel

Please see here for Patrick's comment on the image 'Looking out Bali'

Patrick is a 34 year old Swiss and works in the Air Traffic Control at Zurich airport. He began photography four years ago while working as a service engineer in several foreign countries, and still enjoys travel photography the most. He uses and collects analog manual focus cameras, but lately has been exploring the Digital world with his Olympus E1.

PHIL DOUGLIS' COMMENTS:

Patrick Maechler's "Looking Out Bali" is a remarkably expressive image in both it's content and form. It immediately moved me, both emotionally and intellectually. He uses abstraction brilliantly by shooting his subjects from behind, making them more than a pair of particular people, and instead universal symbols of mankind itself. The sand, water, rock and sky are simple and elemental, providing a clean context for the small subjects. By choosing black and white over color, he takes us out of the present and into the past. This image could have been made at any time, anywhere.

Patrick uses every inch of his frame to good effect. There nothing wasted. Even the black rock, which thrusts it's way into the heart of the image, serves a function, symbolizing a breakwater, a safe haven, guarding these vulnerable people from the vast and unknown forces of nature that confronts them.

The incongruous contrasts of age and ethnicity here take the image out of the ordinary, and stimulates our imagination. There is also strong scale incongruity present -- the tiny figures are dwarfed by the vast domain of nature, yet it becomes all theirs and only theirs.

Patrick builds a substantive message around human values -- vulnerability, expectation, awe, wonder are all expressed here. Ultimately, this image suggests human origins themselves. Life itself emerged from the sea, and here we look back at our origins in wonder and awe. For all of these reasons, I have selected Patrick Maechler's "Looking Out Bali" as the second place winner of PBase Challenge #1.

3rd Place

Title: Chimpanzees - appetite for more
Photographer: Lisbeth Landstrøm

Website: http://www.pbase.com/lla

Please see here for Lisbeth's comment on the image 'Chimpanzees – appetite for more'

Lisbeth Landstrøm is 44 years old and lives in Copenhagen, working with legislation, enjoy kayaking, bird watching and anything that can "stop time" for a moment. She also loves to travel around in the PBase galleries - experiencing all the chosen moments; moments "released from time. She loves taking photos and learning from any comments left in her galleries!

PHIL DOUGLIS' COMMENTS:

Lisbeth Landstom's "Chimpanzees" is a deeply moving image. The key is the abstraction provided by the body language of the mother. She covers her face with her hand. Is she expressing concern? Thought? Is she hiding, or as Lisbeth suggests, possibly depressed or exhausted? The more questions this image asks, the more answers it demands from the viewer.

The incongruity of an animal expressing such human emotions gives this image it's expression. The mother is the subject of Lisbeth's image, the baby providing it's context. The baby's expression is one of trust, yet the size incongruity between mother and baby suggests vulnerability. While this image is all about animal behavior, the values it expresses are deeply human. Concern, thought, vulnerability are all human values, too. As Lisbeth implies in her caption, humans are essentially a layer of skin away from the chimpanzee. We can easily relate to this relationship between mother and it's child and all of the questions it asks -- questions that make this remarkable image the third place winner of PBase Challenge #1.

Visually Effective Portraits: Chuck Gardner

By nature I'm an introspective observer rather than an extroverted participant and always approached photography as a craft to be mastered rather than a canvas for my artistic vision. In fact, I've never claimed to have any artistic vision beyond the ability to intuitively apply various aspects of photography and other disciplines such as the study of human perception to make images more visually effective.

PBase Magazine: Tell us a little about Chuck Gardner the person.

I've been very fortunate to have some unique photographic opportunities more or less fall in my lap. There was a darkroom full of Zone System zealots in the basement of my college dorm who introduced me to Ansel Adams books which became the foundation for my early self-taught photographic knowledge.

Two years later, in 1972, I stumbled across an ad in the Washington Post placed by Monte Zucker seeking an apprentice/assistant. I got the job and an appreciation for how difficult the wedding business is. A conversation over the back fence one Saturday led to a job at the National Geographic photo labs; turned out my new neighbor was the asst. chief of the labs. My experience there led to an evening job at a Maryland Jr. college, teaching the class in photography I took there the previous semester. Various jobs in printing and printing management led to a job managing an overseas printing operations for the State Department, another job discovered by scanning the help wanted ads in the Washington Post. I've done that for the past 23 years with alternating assignments in the Philippines and the U.S..

Apart from the stint working for Monte, photography has been an avocation for which my interest has waxed and waned. My overseas assignments forced me to travel light. My darkroom gear and 645 gear was consigned to storage and I became mostly a point and shoot user. Going digital in 2000 re-awakened my interest in photography and allowed me to utilize a skill set with Photoshop I'd acquired in the day job which made photography fun again. I started participating in Internet photography groups, first in the Philippines and then at DPReview.com attempting to share what I'd learned over the years via critiques and tutorials which many found helpful.

Truth be told I don't like shooting portraits much and as a result rarely use my Alien Bee studio gear. I got my Alien Bee lighting gear out of curiosity to discover how lessons learned by window light applied to the studio setting and discover whether it might motivate me to pursue photography as a post-retirement business. It didn't. I occasionally will make a studio portrait of a house guest, but never with a luxury of a consultation regarding clothing, make-up or more than a few minutes of their time.

I use my riding mower more often than my camera and when I want a challenge and fun nowadays the bag I grab on the way out the door has my golf clubs in it. That's why the request to write this article came as a bit a of surprise, and hopefully will not be a disappointment to the reader. It's not illustrated, so you'll actually need to read the words and digest the concepts. I considered hiring a model to do some carefully planned and executed illustrations for this article, but in many ways they would be counter productive to the way I try to teach. I have no artistic vision or style worthy of emulation. I simply critique photos because I enjoy gaining new insights and understanding of the craft of photography by looking at photos- especially those I'd never in a million years think to take myself-until I understand what makes it visually effective, or not. If sharing my insights into what can make a photo more visually effective helps someone else incrementally improve their work I consider my time well spent.

PROFILE

NAME: CHUCK GARDNER

WEBSITE: HTTP://SUPER.NOVA.ORG

FROM: LIVED IN WASH., DC AREA OR PHILIPPINES SINCE 1972

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE: VISUALLY EFFECTIVE

EQUIPMENT: CANON 20D + CANON LENSES

YEARS AS PHOTOGRAPHER: MY FIRST SERIOUS CAMERA WAS A NIKONOS II UNDERWATER CAMERA PURCHASED IN 1969

CHUCK SAYS:

"By nature I'm an introspective observer rather than an extroverted participant and always approached photography as a craft to be mastered rather than a canvas for my artistic vision."

"I simply critique photos because I enjoy gaining new insights and understanding of the craft of photography by looking at photos - especially those I'd never in a million years think to take myself-until I understand what makes it visually effective, or not"

If you have comments or suggestions, we would love to hear them ! Please email us at magazine@pbase.com

PBM: In the past, you have worked for Monte Zucker, who is very well known for his portraiture work. What was it like working for Monte ?

I had joined the Professional Photographers Association as a student member while in college and he wrote a column in it's monthly journal so I knew who he was when I spotted his ad seeking an apprentice in the paper one Sunday morning in 1972.

Beginning with my interview he completely changed the way I composed and looked at a photograph. He introduced me to the concept of visual effectiveness and how to communicate with a complex subject such as photography into easy to understand core fundamentals. The experience also gave me many insights into marketing, teaching complex subjects with a simple systematic approach, and a bag of photographic tricks I didn't forget. A few times in life you may experience people with a complete Jedi Knight level mastery of all aspects of what they do and Monte is one of them. Taking a good photo is only the tip of the iceberg of that man's genius.

PBM: What got you so interested in lighting concepts ? Is that something that any portrait photographer naturally needs to know ?

I'm actually not really interested in lighting per se. The visual effectiveness of a photograph and the ability of it's intended *Center Of Interest* (COI) to grab and hold the attention of the viewer- is the sum of many things which contribute to the total balance and how the viewer's eye is lead around the photo: clothing, it's coordination with the background, the contrast of both with the intended COI, and most importantly the elimination of distractions which would pull attention away from the COI. Studio portraiture is an ideal medium to teach these concepts because the photographer can control all of the variables; except the shape of the face. Once learned the concepts are applicable to any type of subject; landscapes, still life, sports action, etc. In a nutshell the key to visual effectiveness is isolating the center of interest of the photo by creating compelling contrast between it and everything else: Isolate and simplify; eliminate distractions.

PBM: For a person interested in portrait lighting, which is the one book that you would recommend for beginners ? Also, what would you suggest as a simple and affordable lighting setup to start with ?

I've read hundreds of photography books and have found the Amherst Media books, particularly those written by Bill Hurter, to be very comprehensive and easy to understand. The National Geographic Field Guide series by Robert Caputo are also some of the best I've read because they explain why the various techniques are effective.

Starting set-ups? All one needs is a willing subject and a north facing window (south below the Equator) with soft indirect light and a white reflector. When I worked for Monte that's all he used for his formal wedding portraits. Just align the face of subject to the window at a 45 degree angle so there's a flattering short lighting pattern on the front of the face, then alter the camera angle above and around the subject's face to find the most flattering view. It's a great learning environment because there are only two variables: angle of face to the light and angle of camera to the face.

PBM: How different is portrait lighting from product lighting ?

Products don't have deep set eyes and noses. Getting light in the eyes is necessary to help the viewer find them in the photo and make eye contact. That's an important element for people photos, because whether the subject is staring at the camera or off into space the eyes, and the mouth, are the primary body language signals we use in our personal interactions to detect the mood of the people we meet. Unfortunately there is a nose in between the eyes which creates a sundial-like shadow which can be a HUGE distraction, or not, depending where on the face it falls. Getting light in the eyes and hiding the nose shadow is the essence of the most effective portrait lighting pattern. For other objects without eyes and noses putting the light behind and to the side and shooting into the shadow side usually reveals the three-dimensional aspect most effectively in a two-dimensional facsimile reproduction.

PBM: What advice would you like to give to our readers who are starting with lighting concepts ?

Just open your eyes and engage your brains. Observe how the person reading the news at 6 o'clock is facing toward the camera and try to guess where the lights are positioned. When you watch a movie or a TV series with good production values take note of the facial angles and lighting patterns used in the close-ups. The average scene in a movie or TV show lasts about 15 seconds. Pay attention to what in each scene grabs and holds your attention. Note how everything in the scene has been carefully color coordinated by the production designer and cinematographer to draw attention to the COI of the scene. Observe people in the office or at the Mall constantly from various angles- full face, oblique, profile-to find the most eye pleasing flattering angle. Strangers are better than family and friends for this because you have an embedded memory map of what people you know look like; that after all is how you recognize them.

Notice I don't mention studying the work of other photographers? That's because the most difficult thing for a beginner is to learn how to effectively freeze a moment of time into a timeless image. Seeing how to effectively isolate the COI in the constantly moving tableau of a movie or HBO series is a more effective stepping stone to seeing photographically than looking at still photos. Once you understand what makes a moving image visually effective you'll be better able to understand what is needed to add a sense of dynamic movement to a still one. That after all is the real magic of a visually effective photograph.

How to create a visually effective portrait

This is not an illustrated "put your lights here" tutorial on lighting. Instead it explores the variables which combine to make a portrait visually effective and seeks to explain why photographic vision through the viewfinder differs from the way we experience the world with our eyes.

What is a visually effective portrait?

A visually effective portrait is one in which a synergy of tone, color and line between subject, clothing and background lead the viewer's eye from the edges of the photo to the subject's face and holds it there. It is necessary to create a strong contrast between the front of the face and everything else in the photo to accomplish that goal. Anything which pulls the viewer's eye off the center of interest is a distraction. Distractions are the nemesis of a visually effective photograph and learning to spot them is the first step on the path from normal perception to photographic vision.

Why what we see often isn't what we get in a photo

How many times have you looked at one of your photos only to find a glaring distraction you missed completely in the viewfinder when taking it; like that tree seeming to grow out the head of the subject in your first outdoor portrait attempt? Blame your brain and millions of years of evolution which has optimized human vision to search for threats and food. The color detecting cells in the eye, the cones, are located in the center of the retina. The rods on the periphery of the retina are more sensitive to light, but only in a limited range of blue-green wavelengths. The sensitivity of the rods allows us to detect movement out of the corner of our eyes, but when concentrating on an object, in person or through a camera viewfinder, our visual system will "tunnel" in on the object in the center of our vision, tuning out distractions near the edges.

The natural reflex of tunnel vision will cause a photographer to miss distractions at the edge of a photo when framing it in the viewfinder unless they consciously remember to look for them. I find that zooming in tightly on the intended center of interest (COI) – either literally or mentally – and expanding the composition slowly makes it easy to detect when a distracting object enters the edge of the photo. Using "inside-out" cropping helps to isolate and simplify the center of interest, giving it more visual impact.

Photographers are their own worst critics, in part due to latent tunnel vision. Often a photographer will still be so emotionally attached to the memory of how it was taken that glaring distractions on the print will not be noticed or discounted. Learning to be objectively self-critical regarding the technical merits of a photograph is the first step towards making more visually effective images. A well presented artistic statement is more effective that one which isn't.

What attracts the eye?

From a human perception standpoint contrast is the foundation of a visually effective photograph. Human perception studies have shown the lightest area on a dark background or the darkest area on a white one will attract the eye of the viewer like a magnet attracts steel. It is therefore no surprise that the intended center of interest in a visually effective photograph is usually the lightest object on a dark background, or the darkest / most colorful one on a light one.

> ***What key are we playing in?*** *To fit the dictionary definition of "high-key" all tones in a photo must fall within a narrow range of light near-white tones. Conversely, a photo must have only a narrow range of dark tones to accurately be described as a "low key". But if nothing in the photo contrasts strongly with the overall background tone the viewer's eye will not have a visual clue what the most important area in the photo is. I don't use the terms high- or low-key except in the context of describing the background, i.e.; "A brightly lit face on a low-key background will naturally attract the eye of the viewer. "*

When we meet people in person their eyes and mouth telegraph emotion and intent: Happy or sad? Friend or foe? Human perception studies have also shown a viewer will seek out the eyes in a photo containing a face. This can create a conflict of interest in a portrait if the eye area in the photo is not the brightest area on a dark background, or the darkest on a white one. The viewer will either be attracted to the dominant tonal area then to the eyes, or make eye contact initially only to be pulled away by a lighter or darker distraction somewhere else in the photo. In either case the tonally dominant area becomes a distraction which diminishes the overall visual impact of the photo.

> ***Try this test:*** *To find the dominant area of tonal contrast in a photo without being influenced by your emotional reaction to the content apply a 10-15 pixel Gaussian blur (enough to obscure the content), rotate it 90 degrees, and then look at it from a few feet away. When the image is converted into an abstract tonal map the eye will be naturally*

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drawn to the lightest area on a dark background or the darkest area on a white one. If that area does not contain the intended center of interest of the photo that area will be a distraction from it.

Contrast the front of the face with everything else

The front of the face, specifically the eyes and the mouth, are the desired center of interest in a portrait. For maximum visual effectiveness this area of the face should contrast with everything else in the photo. If it doesn't the viewer's eye will quickly be distracted towards the more compelling light or dark areas in the photo.

The strategy for creating contrast between the front of the face and the background is different for dark and light backgrounds. On a dark background making the front of the face the brightest area requires that the clothing and background be darker in tone than the face. On a white background making the front of the face the darkest most colorful area will attract the viewer to it.

Clothing an important factor

Clothing and background should blend harmoniously with each other but contrast with color and tone of the facial area. If the clothing of the subject cannot be controlled it must drive the selection of the background and lighting style.

Clothing can create the greatest potential distraction from the face of the subject in a portrait. For example, a white shirt on a dark background will overpower the face regardless of how effectively the face is posed or illuminated. However the same shirt would be ideal for a portrait on a white background.

Depicting three-dimensional objects with a two-dimensional medium

Before jumping into lighting scenarios it is important to understand why they are even necessary. When viewing a face by eye our stereoscopic vision allows us to discern it's shape in any light. In a photo the perception of depth is entirely an illusion created in our brain by evaluating patterns of highlight and shadow and near-far size relationships against a memory map of objects we've seen.

Three variables come into play when creating the illusion of depth and shape in a portrait. Facial angle and lens perspective will both affect the near-far size relationships perceived in the image by the viewer. Lighting creates the tonal contour map which is the primary clue the brain uses to discern shape in a photograph.

Facial Analysis

Not all photographs of people are intended to flatter the subject. In fashion the model is often secondary to the clothing. If the subject is a punk rocker with an edge the desired look may be a less than flattering hard edged look. Regardless of the desired look in a portrait, learning how to depict the appearance of a person in the most attractive way possible serves as a useful benchmark for what ever direction you wish to take it from there creatively.

Beauty is subjective but tests in which people are shown random full-face photos of various facial types and asked to rate their appeal reveal that a slim face with well defined cheekbones and symmetrical features is considered by most to be the epitome of attractiveness. Not surprisingly the faces of many top models have these characteristics. The general population is not so fortunate.

All faces are different and there is no magic formula such as a 2/3 or 7/8 view which can be applied to make everyone look their best. Most faces are asymmetrical to varying degrees and the challenge for the portrait photographer is to find the most flattering view of the face; the subject's "best" side.

The face has many different intersecting flat and curved surfaces which create highlights and shadows. The two features which are the main barometers for how the facial angle and lighting are modeling the face are the eyes and nose. It is necessary to get light down into both of the eyes to ensure good eye contact and position the light in a way which puts the nose shadow where it is not a distraction. Other key facial landmarks are the cheekbones, jaw angle from front to back and the appearance of the chin on either side of the mouth.

The best strategy for finding a natural looking appearance which reveals the three dimensional shape and character of subject is a slow 180-degree tour of their face from ear-to-ear under flat light. If a subject faces directly into a light placed behind the photographer and then slowly turns in mug shot fashion from full face to each profile it will be possible to quickly evaluate and analyze the face and determine the most flattering facial angle. The height of the camera relative to the subject affects the appearance of the nose. Keeping the camera above the subject's eye line will reveal the more attractive top side of the nose instead of the nostrils.

Because the world moves around us in constant motion we tend not to pay much attention to facial angles. But a still photograph freezes a moment in time, causing things like bits of cheek or ear sticking out in odd ways to become

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very noticeable and distracting. In art and photography, three precise views – full-face, oblique and profile -- have proven to be the most flattering because they eliminate such distractions and make the face appear more symmetrical and attractive.

Full-Face: The face when viewed from the front through the single lens of a camera appears flat and oval because cheekbones and nose blend into the similarly toned skin on the face and sides of the head behind them. A full face view makes any facial asymmetry very obvious. Because the full face view is so unforgiving it is best suited for subjects with slim symmetrical faces and prominent cheekbones. Precision is required when using a full-face pose because a face captured slightly off center will give even a perfectly symmetrical face an unflattering asymmetrical appearance in the photograph.

Oblique: As the camera moves around to the side from the center line of the subject's nose the stacked planes of the face are revealed obliquely. The shape of the nose, far eye socket and cheekbone become apparent and the ear on the far side starts to disappear from view. When the viewing angle matches the receding angle of the jaw line the parts of the of the head visible beyond the eye, which create the wide appearance in a full-face view, will disappear revealing the cheekbone and eye socket in profile against the background. Elevating the camera above the eye line of the subject renders the tip of the nose and top of the nostrils as a very eye pleasing compound "gull-wing" curve.

The viewing angle where the side of the face disappears from view defines a dividing line between the front and side of the face which is very significant in portraiture because it reveals the shape of the eye socket, cheekbone and chin line. Together they form a very eye pleasing compound curve from eye to chin which makes the face appear shapely and much slimmer than when viewed full face.

Variations in facial geometry require the photographer to use subjective judgment to find the most pleasing balance between the roundness of the cheekbone, the size of the nose and chin line beyond the mouth and the profiling of the eye socket. For example if a person has a face which is wide near eyes but very narrow at the chin striving for a precise profiling of the eye socket may result in a chin which appears too thin and asymmetrical.

Find the "best" side: *An asymmetrical face will usually have one oblique view which is more flattering than the other, which is why evaluating a subject from profile-to-profile before entering the studio and setting the lights is important. When shooting the photographer must get beyond "tunnel vision" on the front of the face to spot and eliminate potential distractions resulting from imprecise facial angles such as stray hair, tips of the ear, or dangling earrings hanging out past the far edge of the face.*

Profile: A classic profile view is how faces are rendered on our coins; nothing visible past the centerline of the face. It is not a commonly used facial view nowadays, but can be very effective when a facial defect or deformity make a full-face or oblique pose less flattering. The exercise of examining a subject's face from ear-to-ear reminds the photographer not to overlook this posing option. As with the other angles precision is important. Imprecise profiles with part of the brow or eyelash visible beyond the centerline create distractions.

Distance Perspective

It is a commonly held misconception that focal length changes the size relationship of objects in the foreground and background of a photograph. Actually it is the relative distances from the near and far objects to the camera, not the focal length of the lens, which affects how they are rendered. This can be easily demonstrated by viewing one's own face in a mirror. When the face is placed an inch away from the surface the nose appears very large in relation to the rest of the face because the nose is two to three times closer. As the distance from the mirror increases the distances between the tip of the nose and ears relative to the mirror becomes progressively more equal and the appearance of the face becomes more normal looking. What role does the focal length of the lens play? It simply allows the photographer to control the cropping of the subject in the camera from the optimal viewing distance from the subject.

As with other variables in portraiture the ideal distance for making a portrait will depend on the shape of the face and the facial view, but 7-10 feet is a typical range for a head and shoulders view. As with the facial angle, the photographer should view the subject's face through the camera lens from various distances to determine the most flattering perspective. Once the distance is determined the camera format and desired cropping will determine what focal length is needed.

For a more in-depth discussion of distance perspective and cropping factors see Doug Kerr's article in the 2nd issue of PBase Magazine.

Lighting the Human Face

Three key points to remember when lighting a human face are: ***1) light the entire photograph to make the front of the face***

"It is a commonly held misconception that focal length changes the size relationship of objects in the foreground and background of a photograph. Actually it is the relative distances from the near and far objects to the camera, not the focal length of the lens, which affects how they are rendered."

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***contrast with everything else so it is easy for the viewer to find it and make eye contact with the subject; 2) put the nose shadow where (anywhere) it doesn't become a distraction, and; 3) treat* everything in the photo other than the face as part of the background which should contrast with and lead to the face.**

We immediately try to make eye contact with the people we meet and interact with so it's no surprise that the eyes are the most logical focal point in a portrait, with the mouth which telegraphs mood and emotion a close second. It is therefore extremely important to devise a lighting strategy which will make the eye and mouth area contrast with everything else in the photo. If it doesn't the viewer's eye will be tempted away by distractions and the photo will have less attention grabbing visual impact.

Facial contrast on a dark background is created by making the area around both eyes and the mouth the brightest area in the photograph. On a white background the tonal balance is the opposite and the eye will be pulled towards the darkest and most colorful areas. On white the most visually effective lighting strategies for creating contrast between the face and background make the front of the face warmer and more saturated than anything else in the photo. Because a white background creates such sharp contrast with everything else, very careful attention must be given to potential distractions which will divert the viewer from the face.

Clothing has the greatest potential to overpower and distract attention from the face of the subject, so it is best to determine a clothing and background strategy before considering how to light the face.

Dark clothing strategy:
Dark clothing → Dark background → Front of face lightest area in photo
If the clothing of a subject is darker than their skin tone the background should also be dark so there is a tonal pathway which leads from the darker empty edges of the photo, across the slightly lighter clothing, to the brightly lit front of the face. When viewed obliquely the side of the face toward the camera should be darker than the far side of the face (i.e., short lighting). Other skin tones such as arms and legs should be covered with clothing, placed in shadow or moved out of view of the camera to eliminate them as distractions from the face. Hands when visible and not located close to the face should be significantly darker than the face and turned sideways to the camera to minimize their apparent size. Everything should lead the eye of the viewer's eye to the brighter front of the face and nothing should distract from it.

The light background strategy:

Light clothing → Light background → Front of face darkest area in photo

If the clothing of a subject is lighter than their skin tone the background should also be light to create a tonal pathway which leads from the bright empty edges of the photo, across the slightly darker white or cool pastel clothing, to the saturated warm tones on the front of the face. The side of the face when viewed obliquely should be brighter than the far side of the face which is profiled against the background (i.e., broad lighting). Exposed arms, legs and hands are all potential distractions from the face and should be covered with white or light clothing and illuminated to make them lighter and less visually appealing than the front of the face on the white background. Everything should lead the eye of the viewer to the darker, warmer front of the face.

Other considerations on white background

Bright colors and dark tones will attract the most attention. If the subject is fair haired the contrasting warmth of the hair and color of the eyes will be the source of visual attraction towards the face, which is why it is extremely important to avoid anything darker or distracting in the photo. In an extreme close-up of a fair-haired subject the colorful irises and pupils of the eyes and colorful lips will dominate both tonally and visually.

If a subject has dark hair it's strong contrast will immediately pull the eye of the viewer towards the face. A good strategy for a subject with long dark hair is to frame the face with it. Because this attraction is so strong the photo should be composed so there is enough white background beyond the hair to create a visual buffer between it and the edge of the photo. In extreme close-ups, dark hair at the top or side of the photo can create a distraction which will put the eye of the viewer towards it and out of the photo. But a dark haired subject makes it feasible to use darker clothing in close-ups if the photo is composed so the dark hair and clothing balance each other visually, framing the face in the middle.

Balanced combinations of dark or bright colors on a white background have a curious effect on human perception. Put a red hat on a subject and it will be a huge distraction from the face. But put a red hat and an identically colored shirt on the subject and the distraction will disappear because the eye will tune out the red color and be attracted to the contrasting face in the middle.

Lighting a face is different than lighting an egg

The best way to reveal the shape of most objects is to place the key light behind and to the side of it and then shoot from the front into the shadows. Consider the appearance of a flat-lit full moon vs. a crescent moon. A full

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moon is flat lit from the front and perceived as a flat disk, while a crescent moon is illuminated from behind and perceived as a spherical ball shape in our mind's eye.

When a human face is photographed on a dark background light is needed on the front of the face to create contrast and reveal the details of the eyes and mouth. Unfortunately frontal lighting also creates a sundial-like nose shadow from the nose which can become a huge distraction if not aimed intelligently by the photographer when positioning the key light. In fact, hiding the nose shadow where it will not be noticed is one of the biggest challenges when lighting a face on a dark background.

Getting a flattering lighting pattern on the face on a dark background isn't rocket science, it just requires getting light in the eyes and hiding the nose shadow somewhere it doesn't become a distraction. Just as a sundial tells the time with it's shadow, the nose shadow can tell the photographer how effectively the key light is positioned. If the key light is too far back around and low relative to the centerline and bridge of the nose, the shadow from the ridge of the nose will fall sideways into the opposite eye socket and the shadow from the tip will cross onto the cheek. If the key light is too high the brow will shade the eye sockets and the shadow from the tip may cross over the lip.

On a white background, lighting a face is even simpler; just contrast it's color with the white background and eliminate any other darker distractions. On a white background the eye will be attracted to the darkest / warmest area in the photo. Placing the front of the face in the shadow side of the lighting created by the fill makes it the darkest area in the photograph if the clothing is light and non-distracting and the brighter key light is used to make distracting body parts like the ear in an oblique view blend into the background.

Lighting Patterns

There are many different classic lighting patterns which you can find described and illustrated in on-line tutorials or in any book on portraiture. It's not my intention to re-plow the same ground. Instead I'd like to stimulate insight regarding what makes each one effective on dark and light backgrounds so you will be able to make your own informed decisions about what is visually effective instead of imitating what some dead painter used. For the sake of simplicity I'll focus on three basic styles: short, broad, and butterfly. Most of the other popular styles such as loop and Rembrandt are variations of short lighting.

Terminology: The terms "short" and "broad" derive their name from the portion of the head the key light illuminates when the face is positioned obliquely or in profile to the camera. In a full face pose there isn't any broad or short aspect to the key light, it is just on one side or the other. It is only when the head is turned obliquely to the camera the front of the face becomes the "short" side and the "broad" side faces the camera.. Butterfly lighting derives it's name from the pattern of the shadow the key light creates directly below the nose when aligned with it.

Short lighting: Short lighting puts the key light on front of the face and in both eye sockets. Regardless of which way the subject's face is pointing relative to the camera (i.e., full-face, oblique, or profile) the key light is placed about 45 degrees to the side of the nose and 20-30 degrees above the subject's eye line. In a short lighting configuration the shadow from the ridge of nose will ideally fall down along the side of the nose, not into the eye socket or cheek and the shadow from the tip will fall downward at angle over the top of the nostril or along the crease between the cheek and mouth where it will not be as noticeable. How the nose shadow falls varies with the size and shape of the nose and the position of the key light. Getting the most flattering combination of highlight pattern on the cheekbones, light in the eyes, and a non-distracting nose shadow is a judgment call by the photographer, which is why people are willing to pay big bucks to record their visage for posterity in a flattering way.

The short lighting is very effective on dark backgrounds with dark clothing because it makes the front of the face the brightest area in the photo, especially the far side which is closest to the light and revealed in sharp contrast against the background. It puts good light in both eyes and places the distracting ear facing the camera into the shadows.

> ***An oblique facial angle with short lighting is one of the most flattering lighting styles on a dark background because the oblique pose reveals the shape of the far side of the face and the pattern of light mirrors that shape with the highlight/shadow pattern from eye-to-chin on the opposite (shadow) side. Even though the face is turned sideways the lighting pattern on the front of the face makes it appear symmetrical, even if the face actually isn't.***

Short lighting combined with an oblique facial view is not visually effective on a white background because the brightly lit far side of the face closest to the key gets lost against the white background and the viewer's eye is drawn to the darker side of the head and ear instead of the front of the face.

Broad lighting: Broad lighting on an oblique view of the face puts the key light on the side

of the head and ear facing the camera. It is not effective on dark backgrounds because it splits the face and places one eye in shadow drawing undue attention to the brightly lit ear. Because the key light is aimed at the ear and hits the face flatly on the side facing the camera there is no modeling of the features and the shadow from the nose will fall into the far cheek and eye. On a dark background an oblique view of the face with broad lighting will make a face appear very wide and less attractive than the same oblique view with short lighting. The exception is a narrow face which will usually appear more flattering in broad light compared to short lighting.

On a white background low ratio (light shadowed) broad lighting combined with an oblique view of the face is very effective because the darker far side of the face contrasts with the background. The viewer's eye will be drawn from the white edges of the photo, across the brightly lit side of the face to the darker front side where the eyes and mouth are.

Butterfly lighting: Butterfly lighting is achieved by aligning the key light directly in front of the subject in line with the nose and high enough to create a downward shadow under the nose and cheekbones, but not so high that the brow casts a shadow into the eye sockets or the nose shadow becomes too long and distracting. It is used most effectively for full-face views, but because full-face views tend to make the face appear flat and wide and telegraphs asymmetry it works best with narrow symmetrical faces with well defined cheekbones. It is also useful in situations where directional lighting scenarios would create unflattering broad lighting or distracting shadows on the face, such as young children and large randomly arranged groups where the orientation of the subjects to the key light cannot be precisely controlled.

The Supporting Role of the Fill Light

The role of the key light in a portrait is to create the highlights and shadows which create the illusion of depth, the third dimension in a two dimensional print or screen image. The role of fill is to simply lighten the shadows created by the key light to match the tonal range the camera can record. In other words the source of the fill, whether a light source or a reflector, should not create it's own visible highlights and shadows, or adversely influence the modeling of the key light.

Many beginners, without giving the role of fill much thought place it exactly opposite the key light where it works against and cancels it's modeling creating unflattering cross shadows and dark voids in areas where the nose shades the key light and the cheek shades the fill.

The only position where a fill light will evenly illuminate <u>everything</u> the camera sees is near the camera axis. A fill light placed near the camera lens is called "neutral" fill because it is non-directional and does not influence the modeling pattern of highlight and shadow created by the key light. Neutral fill falls off in intensity from front-to-back on the subject, helping to create light / dark contrast on the front of the face helping things like distracting ears fade into the shadows. When a fill source is moved off the camera axis on a dark background the side of the head and ear will become too bright and distracting specular highlights from the fill may appear in the shadows.

On a white background the "fill" light near the camera axis becomes the primary source of frontal lighting for the front of the face, with the highlights on the subject used to brighten distractions and blend them into the background. A scenario for lighting a subject on a white background would typically consist of four or five lights: two to evenly illuminate the white background, one near the camera to evenly illuminate the front of the subject, and one or two lights behind and to the side to create shape defining highlights on the edges of the subject's face and torso.

Getting started in portraiture - No lighting equipment required:

In a studio setting with a fixed background and movable lights it is necessary to first pose the subject relative to the background and position the camera in front of it, then move the key light relative to the subject's face to get the desired lighting pattern for that angle of the face. A different facial angle will require movement of both the subject and the key light. All that movement of lights and subject and camera at different angles can get very confusing for a beginner. Making matters more confusing is the fact that most lighting tutorials use the camera axis as the reference point for setting light angles relative to the subject.

Because there are so many variables with artificial studio lighting I suggest beginners learn using the soft indirect light from north facing window (south-facing window south of the equator) and a reflector. You can't move the window, so that eliminates one variable. To change the lighting pattern on the subject's face it is necessary to turn the subject toward the window. Turning the subject's face about 45 degrees towards the window until light is in both eyes and on both cheeks but not spilling past the eye socket on the shadow will produce a very flattering short lighting pattern on the face. A reflector is then moved in from the front on the shadow side to lighten the shadows.

The photographer will quickly realize that once this lighting pattern on the face is established it's simply a matter of moving the camera position to find the desired facial angle and that regardless whether the view is full-face, oblique, or profile the angle of the subject's nose to light source remains a constant angle of approximately 45 degrees

"In a studio setting with a fixed background and movable lights it is necessary to first pose the subject relative to the background and position the camera in front of it, then move the key light relative to the subject's face to get the desired lighting pattern for that angle of the face"

"Because there are so many variables with artificial studio lighting I suggest beginners learn using the soft indirect light from north facing window (south-facing window south of the equator) and a reflector"

regardless of which way the nose is pointing relative to the camera axis. Because of this constant relationship between nose and key light for short lighting I use the centerline and bridge of the nose (eye line) as the zero coordinate or "compass rose" when discussing lighting angles, unless camera axis is specifically mentioned.

The skills and short lighting pattern learned by window light simplifies things when using artificial lights. Pose the subject to the camera for the desired facial view, then move the key light relative to the "compass rose" of the nose for the desired short lighting pattern.

Summary:

From a presentation and tonal standpoint portrait lighting is an exercise in eliminating distractions to isolate and simplify the center of interest; the subject's face. Lighting a portrait so it is visually effective is nothing more than practical application of the visual dynamics of human perception. A portrait should allow the viewer to make eye contact with the subject(s) in the photo, whether they are looking directly at the camera or not, and reveal them in the most flattering, attractive manner. Visually effective presentation of the subject in a portrait requires contrast between the front of the face where the eyes and mouth are located and everything else in the photo. Creating this contrast requires thoughtful coordination of the clothing, background and lighting. Because clothing is the greatest potential distraction the choice of light or dark backgrounds should be predicated on having clothing and background coordinate together so both will contrast with the front of the face of the subject. Only after the clothing and background are selected can the lighting strategy needed to contrast the face of the subject be determined. When done effectively the viewer's eye will be drawn in from the bottom edges of the photo, in and up to the top center where the eyes and mouth are located, and not be distracted to other unimportant areas.

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Please send us your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Competition #2:Take the Challenge !

Welcome to the PBase Magazine Challenge #2. This challenge will be based on the ideas espoused by Chuck Gardner in the previous article, titled "*How to create a visually effective portrait*". We urge the participants to read the previous article and understand the thoughts espoused by Chuck before participating in this challenge.

We asked Chuck to frame the theme of the challenge. Here is what he said:

THE CHALLENGE (#2) THEME:

Make a visually effective portrait which finds and accentuates the most flattering facial angle of your subject and eliminates potential distractions. Photoshop editing is permitted and encouraged to adjust tonality, but edited version should be accompanied by "before" (unedited) versions for comparison.

NOTE: Choice of lighting is up to the photographer – you could use either natural lighting or studio lighting as you deem fit. All entries MUST be accompanied by a description of the setup and the thought process behind the portrait.

THE RULES:

Who can participate?

- *Anybody* with a camera can participate. You do NOT have to be a PBase Member!

What do you need to provide as a submission?

- Up to a maximum of 3 photographs per person, that captures the theme of this challenge (images must be at least 600 pixels wide on the longest side).
- VERY IMPORTANT: The photographer should also provide commentary on the setup and thought process that motivated the portrait. Entries without a commentary will be *disqualified*.
- Please do not add any borders around your images

Who judges these images?

- Chuck Gardner would be the judge evaluating the best submissions. Needless to say, his word is final.

THE PRIZE:

The first 3 winning entries will be presented in our next PBase Magazine (Vol. 4) along with a picture of the photographer and a link to his/her website.

CONTEST DATES:

The Contest starts on Oct 10, 2005 and concludes on Dec 10, 2005. All submissions must be made in digital format and emailed to magazine@pbase.com. If you have questions, please feel free to email us at magazine@pbase.com

Winning photographs will be featured in the next edition!

Questions? Contact us at magazine@pbase.com

*Photoshop*ography: Effective B&W conversion using Channel Mixer

Glenn E. Mitchell, II (who prefers to be called "Mitch") is an avid photographer and digital printmaker. His information and gallery website (The Light's Right Studio) can be seen at www.thelightsright.com, and he can be reached by e-mail at mitchell@thelightsright.com. You'll find other tutorials and helpful Photoshop resources there, including a free action set for converting images to black & white.

Adobe Photoshop® offers multiple possibilities for converting color images into B&W. Two of the possibilities are right there on the menus in Adobe Photoshop®. You can convert your color image into a grayscale image in one simple step by selecting Image | Mode Grayscale or drain all the color away with Image | Adjustments | Desaturate.

The more obvious solutions will leave you with a B&W image. The problem is that they give you no control over the conversion to black & white.

Each channel in a color image is a grayscale version of the image, but each portrays the colors in the image differently.

When you want control over which colors in your image come out darker or lighter shades of gray (or perhaps even push some of them to pure black or pure white), your tool of choice should be the Channel Mixer dialog. You will find it at Image | Adjustments | Channel Mixer.

The Channel Mixer is my preferred tool for basic B&W conversion. It really comes into it's own when you use the Channel Mixer to simulate the B&W film technique of using colored filters to emphasize image features.

As a bonus, at the end of this article, I am going to show you how to enhance contrast in your B&W image and how to let some color show through your B&W conversions, a frequent question on digital photography forums

Getting Started with the Channel Mixer

When you select Image | Mode Grayscale, Adobe Photoshop® discards the color information and substitutes gray shades for the luminosity for the original pixels.

While converting to Grayscale mode is quick and easy, the result is often uninspiring. We can do better. We can take control over how the colors in our image convert to black, white, and intermediate shades of gray.

I chose this image of a Scot blowing his bagpipes along the A82 from Glasgow to Inverness because of the bright reds and greens. For an RGB image, bright reds appear as light gray or white in the Red channel. The same is true for bright greens in the Green channel.

***Figure 1**. B&W conversion the easy way: Grayscale Mode.*

***Figure 2**. The original color image. Lots of greens and reds.*

MITCH SAYS

"When you want control over which colors in your image come out darker or lighter… your tool of choice should be the Channel Mixer"

"Anyone who has tried their hand at retouching, may have found, keeping it "real" is not as easy as it looks. The truth is, it really isn't that difficult or tedious, if you utilize some key techniques, and follow the belief that 'less is more' "

"Each channel in a color image is a grayscale version of the image, but each portrays the colors in the image differently"

Rather than rushing straight to the Color Mixer dialog, I begin by weighing my options with a quick look at each individual channel. By clicking on each tiny eye icon in turn, you can toggle them on and off. Toggle two off and you can see what the third RGB channel can contribute to your B&W conversion.
You will often find that one channel has a more

***Figure 3**. Channels Palette*

pleasing grayscale appearance than the other two channels. Make a mental note of this channel before you open the Channel Mixer dialog. That's where you want to begin your work with the Channel Mixer.

My preference among the RGB channels in **Figure 4** was the Red channel. The skin tones in the Green and Blue channels are too dark. I made a mental note that I wanted my B&W conversion to favor the information in the Red channel and headed to the Channel Mixer.
I never select Channel Mixer from the menu item. I prefer instead to use a Channel Mixer adjustment layer

Adding an adjustment layer is easy. You can select the icon at the bottom of the Layers palette or you can select the Layer | New

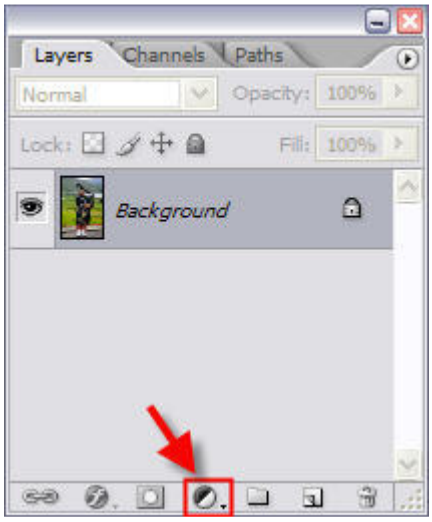


***Figure 5**. Icon for adding an adjustment layer*

Adjustment Layer menu item. Adjustment layers add very little overhead to your file. They give you one enormous advantage, however. You can change the settings or even delete the effect altogether.

Since my initial preference was the Red channel, I created a Channel Mixer adjustment layer and set the Red channel to 100%. The other channels were set to 0%.

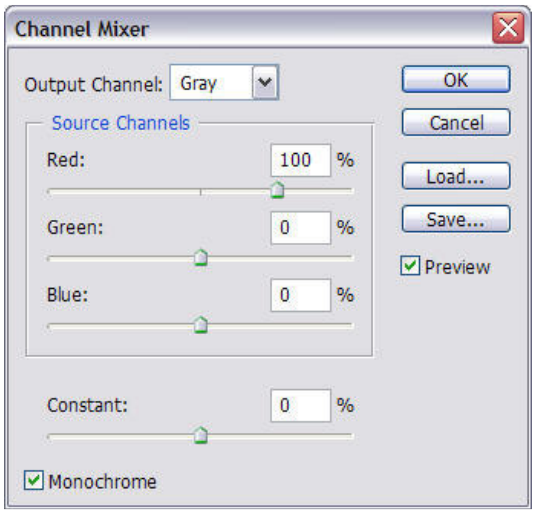


***Figure 6**. The Channel Mixer Dialog*

***Figure 4**. The Red,Green and Blue channels side-by-side*

MITCH ON CHANNEL MIXER:

"Rather than rushing straight to the Color Mixer dialog, I begin by weighing my options with a quick look at each individual channel. By clicking on each tiny eye icon in turn, you can toggle them on and off. Toggle two off and you can see what the third RGB channel can contribute to your B&W conversion."

Make sure to check the Monochrome checkbox when you do B&W conversion.

Monochrome is the appropriate term here. The result is still an RGB image. If you click on the Channels palette, you will find three channels. Each channel will be identical in this case. Grayscale mode images have only one channel.

The Constant slider is used to adjust the grayscale values. As you adjust the sliders for the individual channels, if they sum together to anything other than 100%, the image will darken or brighten. You can use the slider to add more black by setting the constant to a negative value or more white by setting it to a positive value.

***Figure 7**. Channel Mixer conversion using 100% from the Red Channel*

Notice the socks and how the reds appear as a light gray. The face also appears a bit flushed. Pure red (255, 0, 0) appears as white when you use the Red channel at 100% in the Channel Mixer.

I decided to bring in some of the information from the Green channel. I double-clicked on the Channel Mixer adjustment layer, setting the Red channel to 75% and the Green channel to 25%.

The vegetation darkened just a little bit. Bright greens appear as white or light gray in the Green channel. Adding in some of that information from the green channel will lighten vegetation.

***Figure 8**. Channel Mixer conversion using 75% Red and 25% Green*

Reducing the Red slider darkened the red stripes in the Scot's socks. The red wood barrier also darkened. All of this is very predictable, once you understand how the individual channels contribute to B&W conversion.

- Large values for the Red slider lighten features with lots of red and darken features with lots of cyan.
- The Green slider has a similar effect. It lightens green features and darkens magenta features.
- The Blue slider does the same for blue features and yellow features.

B&W film photographers would use a red filter to darken the sky because of it's effect on cyans.

Simulating B&W Film Filters

You can use the Channel Mixer to simulate the effects B&W film photographers achieve with color filters.

I used a color-corrected RGB image of a Macbeth Color Checker Card to create the following collection of filter settings:

Filter	Red	Green	Blue	Constant
Red	100	15	0	-15
Green	35	55	20	-10
Blue	15	15	80	-10
Yellow	60	30	10	0
Orange	75	20	20	-15
Yellow - Green	25	65	15	-5

"Large values for the Red slider lighten features with lots of red and darken features with lots of cyan.

The Green slider has a similar effect. It lightens green features and darkens magenta features.

The Blue slider does the same for blue features and yellow features."

"You can use the Channel Mixer to simulate the effects B&W film photographers achieve with color filters."

In each case, the sum of the three channels and the constant is 100%.

For those readers who are unfamiliar with the effects of color filters on B&W film, here is a brief summary:

Filter	Effect
Red	Lightens reds. Darkens greens and especially blues.
Green	Lightens greens. Darkens reds and blues.
Blue	Lightens blues. Darkens yellows.
Yellow	Lightens yellows. Darkens blues.
Orange	Lightens yellows, oranges, reds.
Yellow-Green	Darkens reds, lightens greens. Good for skintones.

Feel free to vary from these settings. Adjust the settings until you achieve a pleasing B&W conversion. I started with the default Yellow-

***Figure 9**. The Yellow-Green filter effect with a bit of tweaking*

Green filter settings for the image above and then tweaked them to Red +32, Green +60, Blue 0, Constant +8. This is still a Yellow-Green filter effect. Leaving the Blue slider at zero emphasizes yellows. Combine the +60 setting for the Green slider and you emphasize yellow-greens.

I boosted the Red slider setting to +32 in order to lighten the skin tones slightly. It was a cold, windy spring day, so the Scot's complexion was a bit ruddy. Adding a little red would offset his reddish complexion.

I have added all of these B&W conversions (and more) to an action set. You can download the TLR B&W Conversion action set (and lots of other free resources) from my Web site:

http://www.thelightsrightstudio.com

Just click on the Digital Darkroom menu button and then select Photoshop Tools.

One of the helpful features in the action set is the "Quick B&W All Variations" action, which adds a whole set of Channel Mixer adjustment layers. Just pick one and delete the rest.

Enhancing the B&W Conversion

Converting from color to B&W is just one step towards crafting a fine art B&W image. What tends to make a B&W image stand out is careful attention to contrast.

***Figure 10**. Vanilla B&W Conversion*

Several recent articles on B&W conversion have recommended Layer blends for making quick contrast adjustments.

Here's the rub . . . Layer blend modes are powerful tools for quickly taking a mundane B&W image and improving it. When you duplicate an adjustment layer, Photoshop does not duplicate the pixels in your image. It adds a bit of overhead for tracking layer properties and saves the settings for that particular adjustment layer. Duplicate a pixel layer, however, and then apply a blend mode and you increase the size of the image. You must be very aware of the kind of layer you are duplicating and blending.

This maneuver works better with another popular B&W conversion technique. It involves pairing two layers: one to adjust colors and another to desaturate. (You can read more about this technique in my PDF tutorial, *Making a Fine Art B&W Image*, which you can find on my Web site.)

SIDE-BAR MINI-TUTORIAL

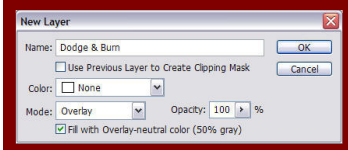
Dodging & Burning

It is sometimes necessary to add a bit of dodging and burning to selectively alter the contrast in specific portions of a B&W image.

My preference is to use an Overlay blend layer, fill it with 50% gray, and then brush in the dodge and burn effect with the Brush tool. This technique gives you lots of control. If you own a Wacom tablet, it is the perfect choice for dodging and burning. The Wacom airbrush will give you even more control

The trick is to use low brush opacity and build the effect up gradually over successive strokes.

To create a dodge and burn layer, the easiest method is to create a new layer, change the mode to Overlay, and fill it with 50% gray all in one step. Just select the Layer | New | Layer menu item or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Shift+n on the PC (Command+Shift+n on the Mac).



(Continued on next page side-bar…)

The technique typically pairs two Hue/Saturation adjustment layers, the uppermost being set to -100 for Saturation and the lowermost set to Color blend and adjusted by eye. You could substitute a Selective Color or Curves layer for the lower Hue/Saturation layer.

Duplicating the upper layer with this paired layer technique makes no further alteration to the image until you change the blend mode to something like Soft Blend. Since the uppermost Hue/Saturation adjustment layer is set to -100 saturation, desaturating it again does nothing. When you use Channel Mixer and layer blend modes, you must be careful. Duplicating the

***Figure 11**. A soft light blend at 35% opacity increases contrast*

Channel Mixer layer just to apply a new layer blend has an unintended consequence. It will also alter the B&W conversion you worked hard to set. The settings for the Channel Mixer get duplicated and unlike a desaturating Hue/Saturation layer, these duplicated settings can alter the appearance of the image. To keep the file size from growing significantly, you can explore the effect of layer blend modes by starting with a new Curves or Levels adjustment layer above your Channel Mixer layer.

The customary advice is to start with a Soft Light blend. If the effect is not strong enough, try an Overlay blend. If the effect is too strong, reduce the opacity for the layer. I used 35% for the image of a weathered barn in **Figure 11**.

***Figure 12**. Image with three blends applied: Soft Light, Color Dodge, and* Color Burn

You can add more control over contrast by duplicating your new Soft Light blend layer and changing the mode to Color Dodge. This will lighten the lighter tones while leaving the shadows untouched. A low opacity is generally required to avoid washing out the image.

Duplicating one of the blend layers a third time and changing the blend mode to Color Burn will darken the shadows and darker tones without affecting the highlights. **Figure 12** shows the result of applying all three blends at different opacities: Soft Light (35%), Color Dodge (10%), and Color Burn (5%).

You could use a Curves adjustment layer instead of maneuvering through a series of blended layers. That's my preference. Careful application of an 'S-curve' can boost contrast quickly and easily

Letting A Little Color Show Through

A frequent question on digital photography forums is, "How do I let some of the original color show through my B&W image?"

The effect can be striking, and yet the technique is very easy once you're comfortable with the selection tools and layer masks.

For the image of the weathered barn in Sneads, AL., I decided to let the yellow straw peek though. That would move the focus right to the straw.

Getting a good mask of the straw was not an easy task. Viewed at full size, there are lots of tiny pieces of straw that required attention. I started with the Magic Wand tool to grab most of the straw as a quick and dirty selection. I then moved back and forth between selection and Quick Mask mode to refine the selection with the Brush tool. Just like the dodge and burn technique, using Quick Mask mode lets you refine a mask by painting on it with black and white.

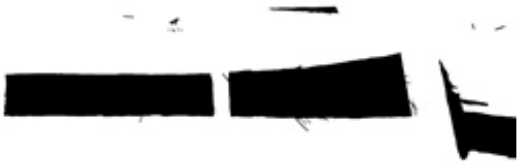


***Figure 13**. Mask used to allow color to peek through the B&W image*

SIDE-BAR MINI-TUTORIAL

(… continued from previous page side-bar)

The result will be a layer filled with gray. The visual appearance of the image will not be altered until you start brushing in the effect. 50% gray has no effect with an overlay blend.

Where you paint with black, the image will darken. Where you paint with white, the image will lighten.

(The Dodge and Burn Layer with the rest of the image hidden)

(The result of a bit of dodging and burning)

The advantage of this method over the traditional Photoshop dodge and burn tools is that this is a non-destructive method and is completely separate from the image. This makes it very simply to alter the 'intensity' of the dodge and burn effect to taste without affecting any other parts of the image.

Once I have invested considerable time in a mask, I save it as an alpha channel. That allows me to go back later and finesse the mask. Adobe Photoshop® stores alpha channels very efficiently.

Some digital artists prefer to use the History Brush rather than creating a mask. Quick, yes. But you cannot change your mind after you save the image and easily adjust where color shows through.

If you still have your selection active, go to your Channel Mixer layer that you used for your B&W conversion and replace the layer mask. When you add your selection as a layer mask, choose Reveal Selection. Since white reveals and black conceals, this applies the B&W conversion where the mask is white and allows the original color to show through where the mask is black.

***Figure 14**. The color of the yellow straw peeking through*

What remains now is to finesse the color of the straw a bit.

I started with a Hue/Saturation layer and boosted just the Yellows by +20. The lighting of the straw was uneven. I made a selection of the straw that needed a bigger saturation boost and used it as a layer mask for a second Hue/Saturation layer with Yellows boosted another +25. That gave the straw a more uniform golden color. Here's the final Layers palette:

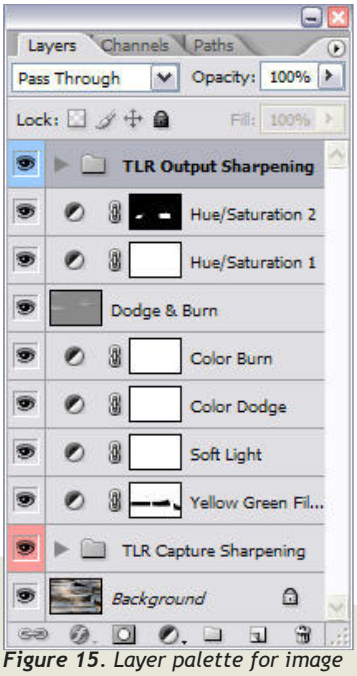


***Figure 15**. Layer palette for image*

Wrapping Up

The Channel Mixer is a very flexible tool for converting images from color to black & white.

There are simpler methods for converting to black & white. More complicated methods, too. The Channel Mixer gives you just the right balance of flexibility and ease of use. You can even use it to simulate the effect of using colored filters with B&W film. Converting to B&W is usually a first step. You can use Layer Blend modes to alter the contrast of an image. You can also use a Curves adjustment with an 'S-curve' to add more contrast. One of the great features of Adobe Photoshop® is it's flexibility. You can often find multiple ways of accomplishing the same task.

Many B&W images can benefit from some selective contrast adjustments. Brushing in dodging and burning with the Brush tool and an Overlay layer filled with 50% gray gives you a lot of control. Where you paint with black, you darken the image; where you paint with white, you lighten the image.

Using a layer mask on the Channel Mixer layer gives you the option of allowing some color to peek through your B&W image. The tricky part is crafting the layer mask. Some selections are simple. More complicated selections, like the yellow straw in **Figure 16**, require experience with the various selection tools in Adobe Photoshop® and lots of patience. Making complicated selections is a topic for another article.

Cheers!

***Figure 16**. The final image, "Peeking Through," a weathered barn in Sneads, AL. The image is a mixture of monochrome and color.*

FINAL WORDS

"There are simpler methods for converting to black & white. More complicated methods, too. The Channel Mixer gives you just the right balance of flexibility and ease of use. You can even use it to simulate the effect of using colored filters with B&W film"

"Many B&W images can benefit from some selective contrast adjustments. Brushing in dodging and burning with the Brush tool and an Overlay layer filled with 50% gray gives you a lot of control. Where you paint with black, you darken the image; where you paint with white, you lighten the image."

Traveling with a Digital Camera

Digital photography has created new possibilities for amateur travel photographers, but careful planning is needed if you want to make the most of these opportunities when you are away from home. Alan Grant shares some of the lessons learned while travelling with a digital camera in more than twenty European countries.

"This is the problem with photography. It is inimical to travellers and to travel. It takes ages to do it properly. You can wait days, months, even years for a crescent moon to appear over the Taj Mahal, and then the camera goes wrong".

The travel writer Eric Newby wrote those words in a book of his own travel photography, so he must have felt that the rewards were great enough to make it worth persevering. Many of us lesser mortals also experience the frustrations of travel photography: the opportunities seem so great, but the end result can often be disappointing. Digital photography can help amateur photographers to reduce that frustration by allowing us to experiment, to review shots immediately, and above all to take lots of photos at no cost. A little bit of planning and some careful decision-making will enable you to make the most of this opportunity.

Choosing a camera

You may not buy a camera solely for travelling, but if you expect to take a large proportion of your shots while on the road, you should allow for this when making your choice.

Online forums can be helpful in determining the strengths and weaknesses of particular models, but they need to be read with a healthy dose of scepticism. Remember that when someone makes the dogmatic statement that "camera X is clearly better than camera Y", what they *really* mean is "X is better than Y for the kind of photography I do". If that involves taking portraits in a studio, their opinion is of limited relevance to your travel needs.

Most of the factors that influence the choice of camera are not specific to travel, but the size and weight of the camera are important. You need to be realistic about the kind of camera you will be prepared to carry around with you, especially if you like scrambling up mountains or trekking across deserts. The best camera in the world sitting in your hotel room is worth less than a cheap camera in your jacket pocket.

A related issue is the camera's zoom capability. Travel photography requires a lot of flexibility – you can easily switch from a close-up of a flower to a sweeping panorama within seconds. A reasonably large *optical* zoom factor (5X to 10X) can help with this (*digital* zoom is essentially a marketing gimmick). At long focal lengths the effects of small hand movements are more likely to be visible, especially in low light. You can combat this by carrying a tripod or looking for anti-shake or image stabilization technology.

There is a lot to be said for using pocket-size cameras when travelling, as you can be ready to snap away at almost any time. They generally have relatively limited zooms, but a high-resolution model (6 megapixels and above) will give you some scope to 'zoom in' further using your computer, provided you don't want very large prints. Of course, there is no way to 'zoom out' if the camera couldn't take in as much of a scene as you wanted. Another drawback of some compact cameras is that exposure controls are buried in hard-to-reach menus – this is not a problem if you just want to point and shoot.

Two views of Council Square, Brașov, Romania. My lens was at the wide position for the first and full telephoto for the second (from a nearby hill), illustrating the flexibility provided by a 7X zoom

At the other extreme are Digital SLRs. These tend to be the purist's choice – they are faster and many people find that they produce 'cleaner' shots, especially in low light. In the long run you can build up a collection of lenses for use in different circumstances. However they are heavier than fixed lens cameras, and despite recent price falls they are still rather expensive. In comparing both weight and price with fixed lens cameras, make sure to allow for lenses

TRAVEL TIPS:

When walking around a city, don't forget to look down…

Sofia, Bulgaria

… and up

Lviv, Ukraine

… and have your camera ready to snap any passing gondoliers

Venice, Italy

Keep your eye peeled when traveling by train too:

Southern Bucovina, Romania

that cover the range you need, not just the kit lens that happens to be sold with the camera.
For my own needs, the happy medium is a high-end fixed lens model with 7X zoom and anti-shake technology, which gives me a lot of flexibility in a fairly small package.

If your camera does not use commonly available batteries, consider buying a spare before you travel. It can seem expensive, but it's worth it for the peace of mind. Nursing a battery, for example by not using the LCD screen, is a serious distraction.
Whatever you decide, make sure you are fully familiar with the workings of your camera before you set off.

Storing your photos

One of the big advantages of digital photography is that you can take as many shots as you want, without being constrained by film costs. But you need to store all those pictures somewhere while you are away from home. There are a number of options:
Bring a laptop with you. This should solve your storage problems, with the bonus that you can review your pictures on a large screen. However it means carrying a lot of extra weight, and brings extra worries about theft. For my style of travel, which involves a lot of moving around, carrying a backpack on trains and buses, this is not really an option. But if I intended spending two weeks in the same hotel, I would consider it.

• *Carry enough memory cards to last for the whole trip*. This is potentially expensive, but as the cost of memory falls it is becoming a more realistic option, and it means you have no extra equipment to worry about. It does involve the risk that you have no backups of your shots while travelling, but then most of us had the same issue with film.

• *Use Internet cafes*. In most of the world, you can't count on finding a fast enough connection to upload a large number of full-size images. Where Internet cafes and photo shops can come in useful is in allowing you to copy photos from your card onto CDs. The availability and quality of Internet cafes is highly dependent on where you are going.

• *Bring a portable CD writer*. These devices are not very well known to the general public, but potentially very useful to photographers. Each time you fill a card you insert it into a slot in the device and copy the files onto a CD – you could even make a second copy and post it home.

• *Bring a portable hard drive*. These vary greatly in sophistication. The simplest ones are grey boxes containing laptop-style hard drives and slots for memory cards. The most expensive are multi-function devices that allow you to view your photos on a reasonably large screen, listen to the radio, play MP3 files, watch videos, and make coffee. I use a 40GB MP3 player that can read files directly from my camera. This choice wasn't made for purely photographic reasons – I also like having my music collection with me when I travel.

In order to choose an option, you may need to figure out how many photos you are likely to take in the course of a single day, and over the whole trip. Your camera's manual should include estimates of the space required for photos at various quality settings. If you normally shoot in RAW, think about whether you can do this when travelling – RAW files eat up disk space very quickly. Similarly, decide whether you need to change the compression level from Extra Fine to Fine. Try to pick a quality level that you will be able to use consistently throughout the trip, rather than starting off shooting RAW and having to switch to the lowest quality setting half way through.
If your camera allows you to choose between different folder structures for your memory card, you should also decide on this before setting off. For example, some cameras can automatically create a new folder for each day – a very useful feature if you are going to end up with two weeks' shooting on one card.
Again, whichever storage method you choose, test it thoroughly before you set off. Make sure you have all the bits and pieces you need, such as USB cables and adapters.

During the trip

When I am out and about during the day, I usually carry a camera bag with the camera (obviously), a spare memory card, spare battery, polarizing and UV filters, lens tissues, and that's it. Chargers and any other equipment normally stay in the hotel.
I am reluctant to write this as it's such a cliché, but it really is true that the best light is often around dawn and dusk. Try to be in a position to take photos at these times - I have to own up to not being a morning person, so I tend to concentrate on evenings. In tricky lighting take lots of photos – after all it costs nothing. If your camera has a bracketing function or a histogram, learn to use these tools to improve your chance of getting the right exposure.
Another way to improve your chances of taking good pictures is to walk a lot. Even at the world's most heavily touristed sites, it is usually possible to escape the crowds by walking a short distance. This can help you to photograph the building or monument with fewer distractions and a different perspective, one that shows how it relates to it's surroundings. An open-top bus tour may show you the sights of a city quickly, but following the same route on foot is likely to produce far more photo

Further reading

• Many of the topics touched on briefly in this article are covered in Adrian Warren's Technical Travel FAQ.

• Digital Photography Review has reviews of digital cameras and forums where you can read about users' experience with specific models. The 'Storage and Media' forum is particularly relevant.

• The 'Computers, Cameras, Phones' branch of Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree Travel Forum is a good place to get input from people with experience of both travel and photography.

• Lonely Planet's Travel Photography is a useful book dealing with all aspects of the subject, from choosing your equipment to composing your shots.

• The creative aspects of travel photography are outside the scope of this article, but if you are looking for some inspiration, read the interview with Phil Douglis in Issue #2 of the Pbase Magazine. Then have a look at his Cyberbook on Expressive Travel Photography.

• The opening quotation was taken from 'What the Traveller Saw', a collection of travel writing and photography by Eric Newby.

Evening sun on the Alhambra, Granada, Spain

opportunities. I like to be able to get at my camera quickly – even the short time required to retrieve it from inside a daypack can results in a missed opportunity. This raises the tricky topic of security.

Many guidebooks advise against allowing yourself to be seen with an expensive-looking camera. If you take this advice too much to heart, you will certainly guard against losing your camera to theft, but at the cost of never using it at all - which renders it worthless anyway. Unless I have a particular reason to be wary, I tend to keep the camera around my neck and hope for the best. Of course I am not advising you to be careless - I certainly don't leave my camera lying in view on a train seat when I go to the dining car.

I find it helpful to follow a set routine each evening. The first step is to review the day's shots on the camera's LCD screen, deleting any that I am certain I will never want to look at again. I do this partly to save space, but also because some unnecessary shots are easier to identify when my memory is still fresh. However it is not possible to be too precise with a small screen, so I don't discard a photo if I have any doubts. I then transfer the day's pictures to my portable hard drive. Unless I am very short of space, I leave them on the memory card, so that I always have two copies. Finally I charge both the main and spare batteries.

Coming Home

As you queue to check in for your flight home, pause briefly to remember the bad old days of worrying about the effect of security X-rays on exposed film. As far as I am aware, no digital equipment has been found to be affected by X-rays.
If you have followed the above advice and taken lots of pictures, do remember that a high proportion of them will be, to put it bluntly, complete rubbish. It's a good idea to edit your collection severely before showing it to anyone, even close family. If this seems like a tedious task, remember that the more shots you *don't* show to other people, the more talented you will appear to be!

Süleymaniye Mosque
I owe this picture to my habit of urban hiking - in this case through a tourist-free quarter of Istanbul

Alan in Romania

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Style Guru: Implementing a Shopping Cart

In this column, we describe how to implement a Shopping Cart in your PBase galleries, especially if you would like to make it easier for your customers to order prints online. A special thanks to Jay Levy, Ray Percival and Simon Masters for bringing to our notice that PBase supports some undocumented variables that helps this automation. The original post by Slug is here.

In this column of 'Style Guru' we discuss how you could implement a shopping cart for your PBase galleries to make it easier for your customers to order online prints.

As of today, PBase does not automatically offer an integrated shopping cart mechanism for it's users. That feature has been in 'development' for a while, and we do not really know when it will be officially announced. In the meantime, several users have already integrated Paypal shopping carts on their own to enhance user experience. Examples of such galleries include www.pbase.com/zylen and www.pbase.com/arjunrc amongst many others.

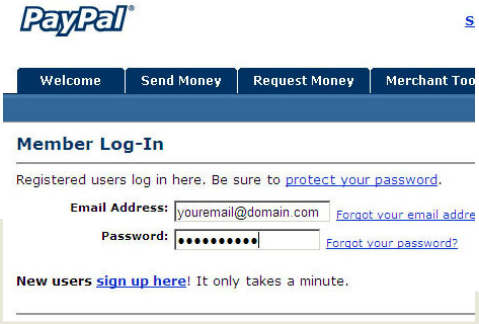
Till a few days ago, implementing a shopping cart in PBase was a manual process where you had to change the shopping cart code for every image. While I was authoring this article, Jay sent me an email that takes away the manual process and you could simply paste the same code for all your images.

Right, now on to the process. Needless to say, you must first be logged into your PBase account before you can integrate the shopping cart.

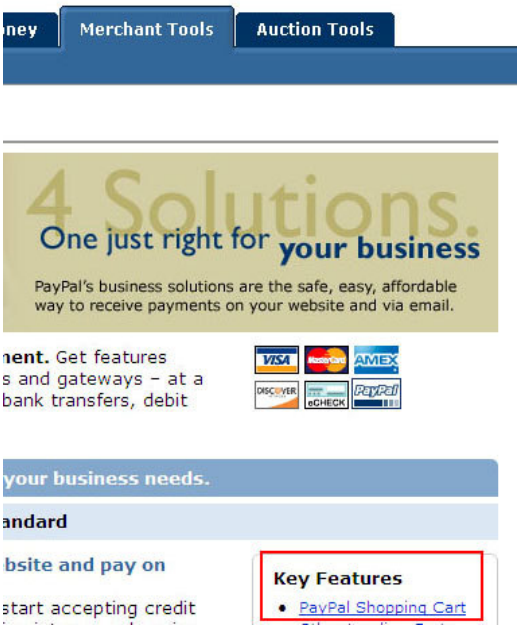
There are two parts to the procedure. The first part involves generating the required HTML code via the Paypal wizard interface. Once this is done, you do not need to use the Paypal wizard again. Instead, all you need to do is modify the generated HTML code trivially to fit into other images.

NOTE: More experienced readers can directly skip to the section titled *"Using the generated HTML in PBase"* - you really do not need to use the wizard.

STEP 1: Log into your Paypal account. If you don't already have one, create one at www.paypal.com - it's free.



STEP 2: After logging in to Paypal, click on the *Merchant Tools* tab button and then on the *Paypal Shopping Cart* link as shown below.



STEP 3: Paypal now presents you with a set of questions which it uses to generate the HTML code. In this example, I enter the name of the photo as IMAGE_TITLE() and the item number as IMAGE_ID(). These are the special variables that PBase will change with the real image name and ID for each image the code is applied to.

GOTCHAS

Remember not to add any new lines or spaces to the code Paypal generates - otherwise you may have display problems with your shopping cart (wide spaces and such)

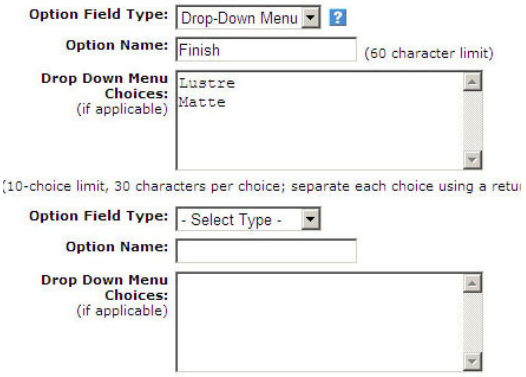
Q: Is there any automated way in which I don't need to change Image IDs for each image ?

A: Yes !! PBase replaces two special items, IMAGE_TITLE() and IMAGE_ID() with the title and the image id of your image ! So all you need to do is change the shopping cart code of Paypal to use these variables and PBase will automatically replace them with the current image and title.

Q: Are there other such variables ?

A: GALLERY_NAME() and GALLERY_TITLE() work as well.

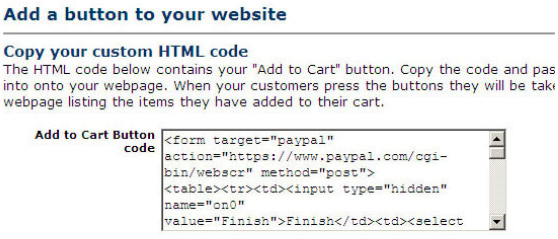
STEP 4: In case you want to add any other "options" you can do so, using the "Add more options" button in the previous screen. In this example in addition to selling images, I'd like to offer my customers a choice of Finish – *Lustre* or *Matte*. So I clicked on the "Add more options" button and created a new *drop down list* and named it *Finish*. This will have a value of *Lustre* or *Matte* depending on which option my customer chooses. If this is confusing, don't worry. All it means is that when a customer places an order, the email that Paypal will send you will indicate that s/he chose a value of *Lustre* or *Matte* for the image.

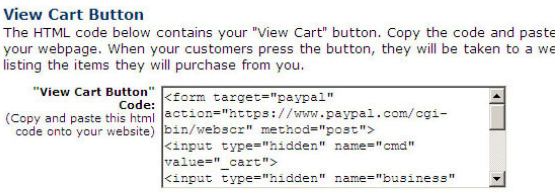


In addition to selecting additional options as above, you also need to select the look of the button that your customers will use to view their shopping cart.

STEP 5: Finally, you need to choose the email address that you would like to associate to your Paypal payments. This is typically the same email address that is associated with your Paypal payments.

STEP 7: Now all you need to do is click on 'Create Button Now' and Paypal will display the HTML code that you need to insert into your PBase galleries, both for the 'View Cart' and 'Add to Cart' buttons.



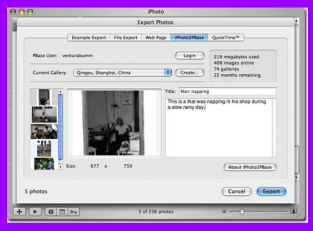


And that's it – Paypal has now created your shopping cart code that you need to insert into your PBase galleries. My recommendation is that you only use this interface once and then keep changing values on your own manually as you iterate through the process of adding this code to all your images. Of course, nothing stops you from using this Paypal interface for all of your images each time, just that it is much slower.
Let's now discuss how to use this code.

Using the generated HTML in PBase

First, let's take a look at how things will look. Let's assume you want a 'view cart' icon in your root page and each image should have an option of purchase when you view the images like so:

Cool Tools

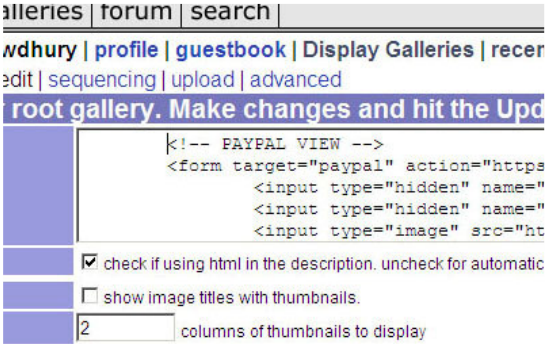


iPhoto2PBase is a great tool by Scott Andrew which provides a snazzy GUI for uploading photos to PBase. As of today this works only on Macs, however Scott has recently promised a new version for Windows as well with many more features. See here for more discussion in PBase forums.

RSS FEED XML

PBase RSS Feed Generator is a useful tool by Srijith that generates RSS compatible feeds for your PBase galleries. See here for more discussion. Also see here for a gallery that uses a neat combination of JavaScript and the RSS feed to display a recent gallery list in the main page.

To add the *View Cart* icon to the top of your root PBase page, all you need to do is add the generated *View Cart* code by Paypal to the *User Description* area of your PBase page, when you click on *Edit Description*. Please ensure that you have checked the box that says "check if using HTML description". Now just paste the *View Cart* code that Paypal generated. This will enable your customers to keep shopping for your pictures and adding them to their cart as well as view their current orders before paying. You can place this code in any place you want. I just prefer to place it at the top of my major galleries.



Adding the shopping cart *Add to Cart* code to all your images

Let us first take a look at the code that was generated by Paypal, and more importantly, what to change for each image we add the same code to. For example, in my galleries, I use the following code for a picture of a splashing Flamingo, where I chose to sell a 5x7 print size for USD 9.00. The image address is : http://www.pbase.com/image/28986875

```
<form target="paypal"
action="https://www.paypal.com/cgi-
bin/webscr" method="post"><table
border="0"><tr><td><input
type="hidden" name="on0"
value="finish">5 x 7 print
($9.00)</td><td><select name="os0"
><option value="Lustre">Lustre<option
value="Glossy">Glossy</select></td><t
d><input type="image"
src="https://www.paypal.com/en_US/i/b
tn/x-click-but22.gif" border="0"
align="center" valign="center"
name="submit" alt="Make payments with
PayPal - it's fast, free and
secure!"><input type="hidden"
name="add" value="1"><input
type="hidden" name="cmd"
value="_cart"><input type="hidden"
name="business"
value="your@email.com"><input
type="hidden" name="item_number"
value="IMAGE_ID()"><input
type="hidden" name="item_name"
value="5x7 IMAGE_TITLE()"><input
type="hidden" name="amount"
value="9.00"><input type="hidden"
name="no_note" value="1"><input
type="hidden" name="currency_code"
value="USD"><input type="hidden"
name="lc"
value="US"></td></tr></table></form>
```

You really do not need to understand everything. All you need to know are the highlighted sections. In my case, I created two additional fields, where one specifies the image size and the other specifies print quality (Lustre or Glossy). Remember, all Paypal does is when you receive a payment, it sends you an email with these fields, saying a customer has bought a picture titled "5x7 The Capitol, Washington DC" with image ID of "28986875" and finishing of "Lustre" or "Glossy" (whichever was chosen by the buyer. This gives me enough information to pinpoint the exact image chosen (sometimes, title is not enough, especially if you have many images and may have repeated a title more than once)

Note that I replaced the Paypal generated item name and item number values by two special variables called IMAGE_TITLE() and IMAGE_ID(). These are special variables that PBase replaces with the Title and ID of the current image your customer is viewing. So if you paste this same code in another image, the values will be different. This is exactly what we want ! The code is completely generic, and you can just keep pasting the same code for each image. If you want to add different sizes, just repeat the above code, changing the "5x7" to something else as well as the price.

Paypal offers the buyer to pay you either by credit card or by alternate paying means that you choose, so you don't have to worry about how the payment reaches you.

In the email you receive, Paypal also provides you with the buyer email as well as the shipping address. All you now need to do is get your image printed according to specifications and ship out. Paypal does not automatically handle printing for you - it is just an order system that tells you "*You have received a payment of $xxx.xx and following are the details*" .

If you are interested in online print services, I could recommend http://whcc.com or http://ezprints.com - I have used both and quite like them.

Finally, this same code can be repeated across multiple images - you need to keep changing the fields in yellow appropriately. Please remember to substitute *your@email.com* with your Paypal registered email id.

To add this code, just click on 'edit image' and paste the modified code in the description area (make sure HTML check box is enabled).

Conclusion

This is just an example of setting up a basic payment system. You can keep tweaking around and add more things. Once you start adding payments to every page, pretty soon, you will have it down to an easy process. Always remember to try it yourself before opening it to real customers.

Finally, please visit the HTML forum of PBase with doubts or questions. The PBase forums are very active and there are always people willing to help.

Do you have a question related to PBase's HTML/CSS controls ? Please feel free to email and ask us !

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Parting Shots

"Parting Shots" is a carte-blanche section where we invite our co-editors to pen their thoughts. We invited Eric to author this section for Issue #3 of the PBase Magazine.

Diane Arbus once said, *"I really believe there are things nobody would see if I didn't photograph them."* To me, that is what photography is all about: seeing and exploring the world in a new light, or at a different angle. I have fallen in love with PBase because it has been the door that allows me to see your world, your culture and your angle of life. I scroll down the list of locations where we "PBasers" come from. Places range from the lights of New York City to deserts in Iraq, from the Strait of Gibraltar to the island of Kiribati. Our world is connected in a beautiful way: a love for photography.

After reading the first two issues of PBase Magazine I emailed Arjun, wishing to get involved. He graciously allowed me to help out and gave me my first assignment. I was to interview a photographer (I know…a shocker!): Doug Barber. He talked about passion and following a career path that will make you happy in life. A photographer is only as good as his passion and love for the art. It is like what Andre Leon Talley said about his book A.L.T. 365+, "This is all done with the flash of a disposable, instant flash Kodak color camera and it's not about the lighting, it's not about the technical brilliance or excellence, it is about the moment of humanity, the emotion of the moment, it's the emotion of people." I quickly came to realize that PBase is so wonderful because each and everyone of us enjoy and have pride in what we shoot.

This magazine is the only journal I read that is not news based (Time, Newsweek) I cannot wait until it is complete, so I can get away from Hurricanes or Supreme Court Justices and read about people who want to make other people happy. Julie Andrews once said on an interview with Larry King, *"When everything else is in dust and the rubble is all around you, it is the arts that will survive."*

In this day and age, one does not have to make a living as a photographer (like Doug), but in order to fully enjoy the world we are living in, it is imperative that you pick up a camera. It allows you to stop in the middle of a busy train station and really enjoy it's beauty, not just race to the train you are about to miss.

The lights go up, the curtain opens and the audience is giving a standing ovation. It's the type of ovation given after someone like Yo-Yo Ma has just finished his Bach concerto, or the one Beethoven received after his 9th Symphony was played for the first time. I envision the photographers of PBase in the audience and Arjun, center stage! Much thanks, Arjun, for leading the way and putting together three fantastic magazines. It has been an honor and pleasure to work with you on this issue. Here's to many more!

The PBase community also owes a huge thank you to Slug and Emily for their vision of this web site and their dedication and direction that has made our virtual world everything it has become. Don't worry; the stage is big enough for them as well.

If you have any comments or suggestions, we would love to hear from you. Email us at magazine@pbase.com and we will respond to each and every single email.

If you enjoyed this issue, found a photograph you liked, or learned something new, I hope you will print out or email copies to not only your PBase friends, but to other people interested in photography and/or art, or perhaps to someone who might become interested after getting a glimpse of this magical world. Then, if they love what they read, sign them up for PBase.com and tell them it will change the way they look at life!

Eric Kuhn
www.pbase.com/aspenskibum

Eric Kuhn

Do you know some people who you believe offer sage advice ?

We are always on the lookout for high-quality articles to be featured in our *Learning*, *Photoshopography* and *Gear Talk* sections. If you would like to refer someone to us for consideration for these sections, please drop us an email at magazine@pbase.com !

How do I contribute ?

If you think you would like to contribute, just email us with a specific idea. Please do not email us asking "what can I do to help ?". Honestly, we would not know the answer to that question.

Instead, if you can propose a concrete idea, it makes it easier for us to be specific in return.

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